THE

HISTORY OF METHODISM

IN THE

WEDNESBURY CIRCUIT

BY THE

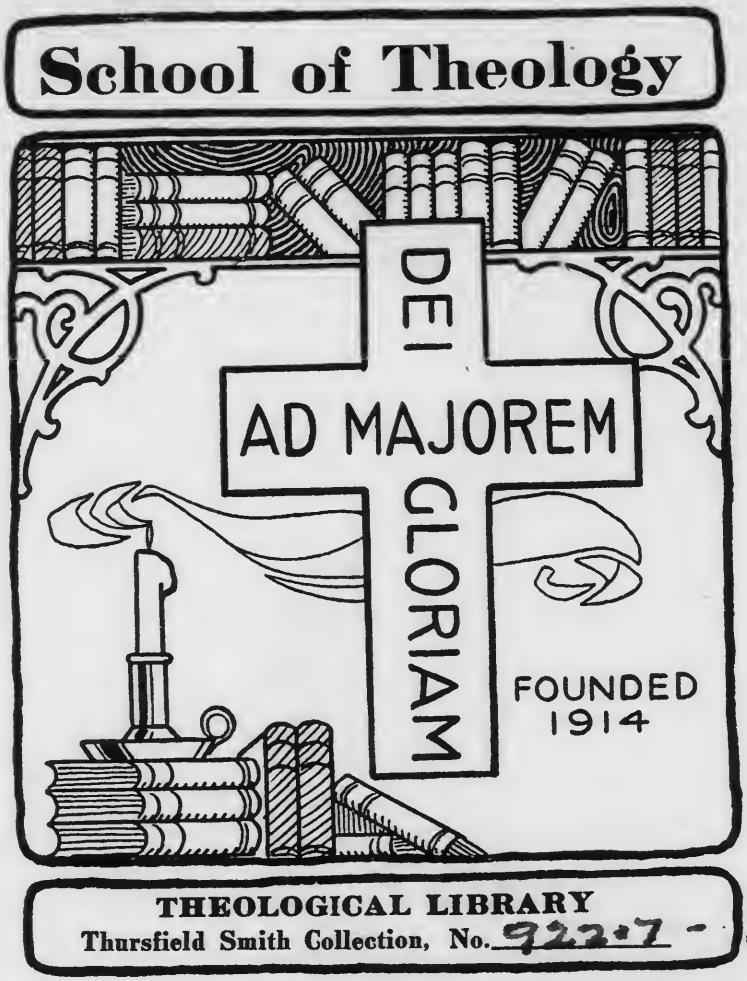
Rev. W. J. Wilkinson.

Reprinted from the Wednesbury Circuit "CHURCH RECORD."

DARLASTON, 1895.

JOHN M. PRICE, PRINTER.

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Preface.

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THE third Jubilee of Methodism in the Wednesbury Circuit, occurring in 1893, it was deemed advisable in connection with special memorial services, to provide a record of the rise and progress of Methodism in the locality. The following chapters, the outcome of that idea, first appeared in the local *Church Record*, and are now presented in a collected form. The compiler begs to thank numerous friends for information, books, and documents, kindly placed at his disposal. In particular he must mention his indebtedness to the Rev. J. H. Wilkinson, Mr. G. Blackham, Mr. F. W. Hackwood and Mr. John Loxton. Without their aid, his sketch, imperfect as it is, would have lacked some features of interest. He also acknowledges the kindness of Rev. C. H. Kelly, of the Conference Office, for some of the illustrations. The writer indulges the hope that the record of a bright and vigorous past will lead his readers to take a renewed interest in the history of their Church, and that in the spirit of their forefathers, they will secure for it by prayer and endeavour, a Glorious Future.

W. J. WILKINSON

Wednesbury,
August, 1895.



JOHN WESLEY.



CHARLES WESLEY.

Introduction.

The tracing of a river to its source, while often a difficult task, amply repays the time and energy expended upon it. By winding valleys, and through pleasant nooks, and past tributary streams, the explorer is led to the far away hills, whence issue the waters that are so beneficent in their flow. The discovery of the sources of the Nile may be referred to as an illustration. Something analagous may be seen in the history of great religious movements. Traced to their origin, they are richly demonstrative of the Providence of God. This is eminently seen in the history of the great Methodist Revival. Methodism may be regarded as a broad river of blessing flowing to the nations, which owes its origin under God mainly to the labours of John Wesley. The rise and progress of the movement have been well told by its historians—Smith and Stevens. While this has been done in regard to Methodism in general, there are many circumstances in its local planting, here and there, which are of necessity, excluded from larger histories, but which are worthy of preservation.

Seeing that the present year marks the third jubilee of Wesley's first visit to Wednesbury and the formation of the Society, we propose to give some account of the origin and growth of Methodism in the town and neighbourhood. During the past one hundred and fifty years Methodism has been a powerful factor in the religious history of the town, and we cannot recall its early struggles without gratitude to God, that in face of fierce opposition our fathers stood steadfast in the faith, and left us the legacy of their bright and heroic example.

Methodism began its course in Wednesbury in the middle of the last century. The town was then much smaller than it is

at present. Mr. Tyerman says, "At this period, West Bromwich was an open common, covered with heath, and burrowed with rabbit warrens. Wednesbury was a small country town, irregularly built, the roads following ancient footways, and leaving wide spaces unoccupied. One of these was called the 'High Bullen,' and was the place where bulls were baited. So extensively did this barbarous sport prevail in the 'black country' that in Tipton parish nineteen of these furious animals were baited at one of the annual wakes. Wednesbury, however, was most celebrated for its cock-fights. Indeed the Wednesbury 'cockings,' as Charles Knight informs us, were almost as famous as the races of the 'Derby day' at the present time."

The spiritual life of the people was at its lowest ebb. Swearing, drinking, Sabbath-breaking and general ungodliness prevailed. Into this seething mass of brutality and worldliness, the Gospel leaven was introduced by the preaching of the Wesleys. The visits of John, the elder brother, as recorded in his journals, were some twenty-eight in number, and ranged over a period of forty-seven years. He preached in Wednesbury at least forty-five sermons. Sometimes his visit is limited to a single day, occasionally to a single service, and then he is off elsewhere on his mission of love. At other times he tarries for days in this part of the field, sowing patiently the good seed of the Kingdom. To his brother Charles, however, belongs the honour of first breaking the fallow ground and preaching the Gospel in the town of Wednesbury. Charles was not only the Poet of Methodism, but in the early part of his career he was a flaming evangelist, and a mighty preacher of the Word. It was in November 1742, and accompanied by Mr. Graves, that he appeared on the scene and took his stand in a convenient *hollow*, termed the "Coalpit Field,"—probably in the neighbourhood of the present *Hollow*-way Bank. It was about half a mile from the town. John Eaton, who was present, said his subject was "Salvation by Faith." We gather that he spent some days in the neighbourhood, but for any detailed account of his visit we have searched in vain.



Wesley and the Mob.—Wednesbury, October 20th, 1743.

Chapter I.

THE YEAR OF GRACE, 1743.

IN the centre of the Wednesbury Market Place, and opposite the Golden Cross Inn, there formerly stood an unsightly building, known as The Cross or Town Hall. It was erected in 1709, by John Hoo, Lord of the Manor. It consisted of two upper rooms, built on pillars and arches, access to which was gained by a flight of steps at the northern end. Under these rooms was what was known as The Butter Market, but which was too often a receptacle of filth. The building becoming dilapidated, and the Lord of the Manor declining to repair it, the parishioners decided in 1824 to pull it down, and thus one of the old land marks of the town disappeared.

This building stands identified with our story as the place where John Wesley opened his commission in Wednesbury. At 4 o'clock on Wednesday, the 5th of January, 1743, he rode into the town. At seven he was preaching in the Town Hall from "This is the covenant which I will make after those days saith the Lord." The hall was "filled from end to end, and all appeared to be deeply attentive." How Wesley employed his time during the next three days does not appear: probably he was reconnoitering in the neighbourhood and doubtless preaching each day. On the following Sunday, however, January 9th, we find him preaching again in the Town Hall at five o'clock in the morning, "proclaiming the name of the Lord." At eight o'clock he took his stand in The Hollow, at the Coal Pit Field, where his brother opened his commission. Concerning this

service he says, "They stood in a half-circle one above another, and seemed all to receive with joy that great truth, the kingdom of God is not meat, &c." In the afternoon he heard a plain useful sermon from Rev. Mr. Egginton, the vicar of the parish. He then went in company with most from the Parish Church to The Hollow, which could hardly contain the multitude that came from all parts, and listened to his words on "By grace are ye saved through faith." As the result of these services twenty-nine were formed into a society; and by Tuesday they increased to a hundred. On the Monday he preached at five and at eight and at three o'clock, and in the intervals spoke to all who desired it. He took leave of them on Wednesday the 12th, after explaining the difference between the righteousness of the law and that of faith.

During this first visit of four days he preached at least eight times, and founded the Society. Up to this time his relations with the Vicar were of the most cordial kind. In a letter to Mr. John Smith he says, "When I preached at Wednesbury first, Mr. Egginton, the vicar, invited me to his house, and told me that the oftener I came the welcomer I should be; for I had done much good there already, and he doubted not but I should do much more." Mr. Wesley on his second visit in the following April, "found things surprisingly altered." The clergyman's "former love had turned into bitter hatred." This was brought about by "the inexcusable folly" of Mr. Williams, a Welshman, who is said to have vilified the clergy, and called them dumb dogs that could not bark. These and other ill-advised utterances exasperated the clergyman and sowed the seeds of the after disturbances.

On Sunday, April 17th, Mr. Wesley heard the Vicar preach a sermon, delivered with "such bitterness of voice and manner" as he had never heard before. He judged what the effect must be, and to prepare his people for the coming storm he, on the Tuesday following, spoke from "If any man come after Me and hate not his father and mother,—yea and his own life,—he cannot be my disciple."

The next month, May 20th, Charles Wesley visited Wednesbury and found a Society of three hundred, "seeking full redemption in the all cleansing blood." "The enemy" he says, "rages exceedingly, and preaches against them. A few have returned railing for railing; but the generality have behaved as the followers of Christ." Some nameless dissenter had given a plot of ground on which to erect a Chapel, and Charles Wesley "consecrated it by a hymn."

Proceeding to Walsall, the celebrated hymn-writer was violently assaulted by the mob.

On the evening of the 22nd he preached in Wednesbury, and on the day following exhorted them to continue in the faith and that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." "With many tears and blessings," he says, "they sent me away, recommended to the grace of God."

The rapid progress of the work in Wednesbury is noteworthy. The Society formed on the 9th of January, consisting of twenty nine persons, by May the 20th had increased to three hundred! So mightily had the word prevailed! What provision was made for worship and preaching, where the Society met, and by whom the services were conducted, does not appear. But Wesley was an organizer, as well as an evangelist, and he would make the best arrangements possible. It is probable that the early Methodists would hold occasional preaching services in "The Hollow," near the town; and that more frequently they would meet in each other's houses, as those did at Line and Mare's Green, of whom it is said, "They set apart one evening in a week to meet and encourage one another by reading a chapter, singing a psalm, or a hymn, and praying and conversing together."

The infant Church was now to pass through fiery trials; its members were exposed to the violence of infuriated mobs; they were subjected to personal assaults; their house windows were broken, and their furniture destroyed. We have graphic accounts from Wesley's pen, reading like additional chapters in the Acts of the Apostles. These may be found in his

journals and in a curious pamphlet, entitled "Modern Christianity exemplified at Wednesbury and other adjacent places in Staffordshire."—London and Bristol, 1745. Price, Twopence. An extract or two from this pamphlet will give some slight idea of the indignities to which the first Methodists of the district were subjected. Here is the abridged testimony of Francis Ward, whose name frequently appears in these documents and at whose house the Wesleys usually stayed. After stating that on the 3rd of May, John Eaton and himself went to Walsall, "to see if we could have justice done to the rioters," he says, "The Justice came out and said we must go into the town, and then he would hear our complaint."

"As we went the mob continued to pelt us, though the justice was with us. I desired he would be pleased to read the Act of Parliament against riots; but he would not. Entering into a house, he called for John Adams or his wife, and without hearing them speak, said "What, are you Methodists?" and immediately went out to the mob. We stayed in the house a considerable time, hoping they would disperse; but as soon as we came out they gathered round us again, and pelted us with whatever they could find. One of them came to me and struck me on the eye, so that I expected to lose my sight. I got into a shop and had my eye dressed, and then returned to my friends. The mob pursued me again, fetched me out of the house and beat me. With much difficulty I got from them and escaped a second time in the house. They fetched me out again and dragged me along the street till I had quite lost my strength. Then came a poor woman and said to the mob, 'Will ye kill the man?' and lifted me up. With much ado I got home; but the abuse I received threw me into a fever." On another occasion one George Winspon, of Darlaston, entered his house, broke down the fire-grate and carried away his portable property; after which, others broke his windows and destroyed his furniture. He appraised his loss at £22 14s. 6d. Under date June 21st, 1743, John Eaton testified, "A large mob came to my house at Wednesbury. I was then constable; so I went to

the door with my staff and began reading the Act of Parliament against riots; but the stones flew so thick about my head that I was forced to retire; so they broke half my windows and went away. Some hours after they came again and broke all the rest, and the door of my house, and the clock to pieces. This is a short account of the *first* damage that was done to me."

Humphry Hands speaks of great numbers of men being gathered on Church Hill, armed with swords, clubs and axes, and how they went from house to house damaging the property of those who would not sign a paper against the Methodists. Coming to his house, he says, they broke my counter, boxes and drawers to chips, and all that axe or hammer could break, except my bedsteads. They spilled my drugs and stole everything they could carry.

In the pamphlet above named, from which these particulars are taken, a list of thirty-three names is preserved with the estimated loss of each, forming a total of £504 7s. 10d. In the following year we read of Charles Wesley that "On his return from London he raised £60 to alleviate the sufferings of the persecuted Methodists at Wednesbury."

Under date of June 18th, Wesley wrote in his Journal "I received a full account of the terrible riots in Staffordshire. I was not surprised at all: neither should I have wondered if after the advices they had received from the pulpit, as well as from the episcopal chair, the zealous High Churchmen had rose, and cut all that were Methodists to pieces." Two days after he says, "Resolving to assist them as far as I could, I set out and in the morning of Wednesday, June 22nd, came to Francis Ward's at Wednesbury." During this visit he rode over to Tamworth and consulted Counsellor Lytton, who assured him the law was in favour of his people, and would ensure the punishment of the rioters. The clergy and magistrates favoured the mob. The former instigated it and the latter refused to repress it. What say the magistrates of the present day, some of whom are selected from the ranks of Methodism, to the

following proclamation which Wesley regarded as one of the greatest curiosities of its kind that England has seen :—

"To all High Constables and others of His Majesty's Peace Officers within the County of Staffordshire :—

Whereas, we, His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County of Stafford, have received information that several disorderly persons styling themselves Methodist preachers, go about raising routs and riots to the great damage of His Majesty's liege people, and against our Sovereign Lord the King :

These are in His Majesty's name, to command you, and every one of you, within your respective districts, to make diligent search after the said Methodist preachers, and to bring him or them before some of us, His said Majesty's Justices of the Peace, to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.

Given under our hands and seals, this 12th day of October, 1743.

J. Lane,
W. Persehouse."

John Lane was the head of an ancient family, and grandson of the famous John Lane, who sheltered Charles II at Bentley Hall. William Persehouse, the other justice, lived at Reynold Hall, which stood a little south of the present Arboretum, Walsall.

But eight days after the issue of this extraordinary manifesto, the intrepid evangelist, then forty years of age, entered the wild beast's den. October 29th, 1743, was a memorable day in Wesley's history, and the account of his almost miraculous deliverance, though an oft told story must of necessity be repeated in a history of Wednesbury Methodism. Wesley says, "I believed it to be my duty to call once more on this poor, harassed, persecuted people. So on October 20th, I rode over from Birmingham to Wednesbury, and preached at noon (perhaps from the Horse Block in High Bullen) to a far larger congregation than was expected, on 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;' and no creature offered to

molest us, either going or coming." What further transpired is best related by Mr. Tyreman.—"Two or three hours afterwards, while he was writing at Francis Ward's, the mob beset the house and cried 'bring out the minister; we will have the minister.' At Wesley's request three of the most furious came into the house, and after the interchange of a few sentences were perfectly appeased. With these men to clear the way Wesley went out, and standing in the midst of the surging mob, asked them what they wanted with him. Some said 'We want you to go with us to the justice.' Wesley replied, 'That I will with all my heart;' and away they went. Before they had walked a mile the night came on, accompanied with heavy rain.

Bentley Hall, the residence of Mr. Lane, the magistrate, was two miles distant. Some pushed forward and told Mr. Lane that they were bringing Mr. Wesley before his worship. 'What have I to do with Mr. Wesley?' quoth the magistrate; 'take him back again.' Presently the crowd came up and began knocking for admittance. A servant told them that his master was in bed. The magistrate declined to see them, but his son asked their business. A spokesman answered, 'To be plain, sir, if I must speak the truth, all the fault I find with him is that he preaches better than our parsons.' Another said, 'Sir, it is a downright shame; he makes people rise at five in the morning to sing psalms. What advice would your worship give us?' 'Go home' said Lane, the younger, 'and be quiet.'

Finding it impossible to have an audience of Mr. Lane, they then hurried Wesley to Walsall to Mr. Justice Persehouse. It was now about seven o'clock, and of course dark. Persehouse, however, also refused to see them on the ground that, like magisterial Mr. Lane, he was gone to bed; and hence there was nothing for it but to trudge back again. About fifty of the crowd undertook to be Wesley's convoy, but, before they had gone more than a hundred yards, the mob of Walsall ran after them; some were pelted, others fled, and Wesley was left, alone and unbefriended, in the hands of the victorious ruffians. Some tried to sieze him by the collar, and pull him down. A big

lusty fellow just behind him struck him several times with an oaken club. Another rushed through the crowd, lifted his arm to strike, but on a sudden let it drop and only stroked Wesley's head, saying 'What soft hair he has!' One man struck him on the breast; and another on the mouth, with such force, that the blood gushed out. He was dragged back to Walsall, and attempting to enter a large house, the door of which was standing open, he was seized by the hair of the head and hindered. He was then paraded through the main street, from one end of Walsall to the other. Here he stood and asked 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many said 'No, no, knock out his brains; down with him! kill him at once.' Wesley asked 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or in deed?' Again they cried 'Bring him away.' Wesley began to pray; and now a man who just before headed the mob, turned and said, 'Sir I will spend my life for you; follow me and no one shall hurt a hair of your head. Two or three of his comrades joined him; the mob parted; and these three or four brave ruffians, the captains of the rabble on all occasions, and one of them a prize-fighter in a bear garden, took Wesley and carried him safely through the infuriated crowd. He writes, 'A little before ten o'clock God brought me safe to Wednesbury, having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from off my hands. From the beginning to the end I found the same presence of mind, as if I had been sitting in my own study: only once it came into my mind, that if they should throw me into the river it would spoil the papers that were in my pocket. For myself I did not doubt but I should swim across, having but a thin coat and a light pair of boots.'

It is right to add that in the midst of all these perils, there were four brave Methodists who clung to Wesley, resolved to live or die with him, namely, William Sitch, Edward Slater, John Griffiths and Joan Parks. When Wesley asked William Sitch what he expected when the mob seized them, William answered with a martyr's spirit 'To die for Him who died for us.' And when Joan Parks was asked if she was not afraid, she

said, 'No; no more than I am now. I could trust God for you as well as myself."

Wesley's rescuer on this occasion was "honest Munchin," as he was called, but as Mr. Tyerman says "'Munchin' was a nickname only—a provincial word expressive of coarse brutal strength. His real name was George Clifton. He lived in a small house at the foot of Holloway Bank, and never tired of telling, in after days, how God stayed his hand when he nearly took Wesley's life. He died in Birmingham in 1789, and was buried in St. Paul's Churchyard."

The conclusion of the adventure we give in Mr. Wesley's own words. "When I came back to Francis Ward's I found many of our brethren waiting upon God. Many also whom I had never seen before came to rejoice with us. And the next morning as I rode through the town on my way to Nottingham every one I met expressed such a cordial affection that I could scarce believe what I saw and heard."

The Wednesbury and Walsall riot formed the subject of a fine picture by Claxton, an engraving of which hangs in the library of the Spring Head Church, and a copy of which adorns our pages.

At Nottingham Mr. Wesley met his brother Charles, who says in his journal, "My brother came, delivered out of the mouth of the lion. His clothes were torn to tatters; he looked like a soldier of Christ. The mob of Wednesbury, Darlaston and Walsall were permitted to carry him about with a full intent to murder; but his work is not yet finished, or he had been now with the souls under the altar."

Nothing daunted by the ill usage of his brother, Charles started forthwith, and under date of October 25, says "he was much encouraged by the patience of our brethren from Wednesbury. They pressed me to come and preach to them in the midst of the town. I found the brethren assembled, standing fast in one mind and spirit, in nothing terrified by the adversaries. The word given me was, 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong.' Jesus was with us

in the midst. We sang praises with courage, and set our seal to the truth of the Lord's saying, 'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake.' We laid us down and slept for the Lord sustained us. As soon as it was light I walked down the town and preached boldly. It was a glorious time; our souls were satisfied as with marrow and fatness. We now understood what it was to receive the word in much affliction, and yet with joy in the Holy Ghost." On this visit he received several new members into the society, and amongst them *Munchin*, the late leader of the mob. He asked him what he thought of his brother. "Think of him" said he, "that he is a man of God, and God was on his side when so *many of us* could not kill *one man*."

The next to appear on the scene was John Nelson, the Yorkshire stonemason. He was on his way from Cornwall to the north. His journal is sadly lacking in dates, but the following entry certainly refers to this period. "I preached at Stroud and several other places on my way to Wednesbury, whither I came not long after the people had been mobbed in such a cruel manner. I preached in an open yard to a very large congregation of people several times. Some of the mobbers came to hear me, but all behaved well. He who stops the raging of the sea can stay the madness of the people."

Messrs. Graves and Williams seem to have been preachers in charge. For sometime they only held meetings in private houses, but they now began to preach publicly.

The Rev. George Whitefield accepted an invitation to preach in the town, and on Christmas Day, which fell on a Sunday, after preaching at Birmingham he came on to Wednesbury, and at six o'clock he preached to many hundreds in the street, the word being with power. The next day at eight o'clock he preached to a large company in a field. After proclaiming the Gospel to thousands on a common near Birmingham, we find him back again in Wednesbury, where he preached at three o'clock, and afterwards exhorted. About one he went to bed "exceedingly happy." He was then 29 years of age, in the

full vigour of life and the rich fervour of love.

Thus closed the first year of the history of Methodism in Wednesbury; a year not only remarkable for the origin and rapid growth of an infant church, but as the time of persecution in which its members stood fast in the Lord; a year of special sympathy and labour on the part of the great leader of the movement. Probably no town in the kingdom was so highly favoured as to record four visits from John Wesley, two from his brother Charles, one from the eloquent Whitefield, and one from John Nelson, the Yorkshire stonemason. Surely we have rightly described it as *The Year of Grace*, 1743.

Chapter II.

SUBSEQUENT VISITS OF THE WESLEYS, 1744—1790.

EARLY in 1744 the persecution was renewed. Egginton, the Wednesbury vicar, had drawn up a paper and sent it round by the crier, demanding that the Methodists must sign it or take the consequence. This document required them never to read, or pray, or sing together, or hear the Methodist parsons again. On refusing to sign, their houses were to be demolished. Some few complied through fear, but most stood firm. Early in February Charles Wesley again appeared on the scene. By this time the persecuting vicar had died. The seeds of bitterness, however, were still bearing fruit. The following is from the journal (C. W.):—

"February 2nd, 1744. I set out with Brother Webb for Wednesbury, the field of battle. We met with a variety of greetings on the road. I cried in the street, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Several of our persecutors stood at a distance, but none offered to make the least disturbance. I walked through the blessings and curses of the people, but the blessings exceeded. Never have I observed such bitterness as in these opposers.

"February 3rd. I preached and prayed with the society, and beat down the fiery, self-avenging spirit of resistance, which was rising in some, to disgrace, if not to destroy, the work of God." Meanwhile both in Wednesbury and Darlaston deeds of spoliation were performed. Appeals for protection to the magistrates were in vain. One of them said it was the best thing the mob ever did to beat the Methodists, and he himself would give five pounds to drive them out of the country.

When Francis Ward sought the protection of another, he simply delivered him to the mercy of the mob and throwing his hat round his head cried "Huzza, boys; well done, stand up for the church." Charles Wesley tarried still another day.

"February 4th. I spoke with those of our brethren who have lost their worldly goods, and found them entirely resigned to the will of God; all thoughts of resistance are over. They are resolved, by the grace of God, to follow my advice and suffer all things."

On reaching Nottingham he sent a messenger to Lichfield for further intelligence as to the Staffordshire riots. "He met Brother Ward who had fled thither for refuge. The enemy had gone to the length of his chain. The rabble of the country had laid waste all before them. I received a note from two of the sufferers whose loss amounts to two hundred pounds. My heart rejoiced in the great grace which was given them; for they joyfully took the spoiling of their goods."

The spirit pervading the society is described in words written at the close of the month, "We keep meeting together morning and evening, are in great peace and love with each other, and are nothing terrified by our adversaries. God grant we may endure to the end!"

It is somewhat singular to relate that a Quaker was the means of quelling the riots. Happening to ride through the town, the mob took him for a Methodist parson, tore him from his horse, conveyed him to a coal pit and threatened to throw him in. The good man prosecuted his assailants at the assizes and procured their punishment; and from that time the tumults ceased.

When John Wesley next visited the town, which was Friday, May 3rd, 1745, he says "The Lord hath stilled the madness of the people. I preached at seven without any hindrance at all." On the Sunday following a few clods were thrown, but the interruption soon subsided, and he applied the gracious words, "Come unto Me, &c." Once again ere the year closed is Wesley found in Wednesbury. This was in November. The night was dark, and the road miry, and he became entangled

in a bog. The people came with candles. Leaving them to look after the horse he made his way to Francis Ward's, and bedaubed with mire at once began to preach, his text being "Fear not ye; for I know ye seek Him that was crucified." The next day, Sunday, he preached three times; at the afternoon service to "well nigh the whole town, high and low, as at the beginning."

We now pass to another phase in the history of the society. As we have seen, persecution availed not for its destruction. As refining fire it served to test the graces and to perfect the character of its members. It had proved to be a bond whereby they were united more closely to Christ and to each other. Now that they were relieved from the oppression of their adversaries, a greater peril arose from false teachers. As the Galatians were led away from the simplicity of the faith of Christ by Judaizing teachers, so the early Methodists were in danger from Antinomian,* and Predestinarian teachers who led many away from the first ardour of their love. That sad havoc was made in the Wednesbury society appears from the journals of the Wesleys.

Wesley's seventh visit was in 1746. Under date of Saturday, March 22nd, he writes, "I came to Wednesbury. The Antinomian teachers had laboured hard to destroy this poor people. Sunday, 23rd. I talked an hour with the chief of them—Stephen Timmins. I was in doubt whether pride had not made him mad. An uncommon wildness and fierceness in his air, his words, and the whole manner of his behaviour, almost induced me to think God had for a season given him into the hands of Satan."

It was during this year that the society was favoured for three months with the ministration of Joseph Cownley, one of the early Methodist preachers, who did good service under the direction of Mr. Wesley. In a voice "strong, soft, and har-

* For the sake of our youngest readers we may say that an Antinomian teaches that under the Gospel dispensation the law is of no obligation; that faith in Christ supersedes the necessity of good works and a virtuous life.

monious," he pressed home on his hearers the truths of the Gospel, and that with great unction and success. This year also we find Charles Wesley visiting the brethren in Staffordshire, and as he preached at Tipton Green, we can hardly doubt that he took Wednesbury in his tour.

On Wednesday, June 29th, 1748, the elder brother "preached at Wednesbury to an exceeding large congregation; and every man, woman and child behaved in a manner becoming the Gospel."

From the entries in the journal of 1751, it appears that John Haime, the converted soldier, was deputed to labour in Wednesbury, and that on April 1st he had just commenced the service when Mr. Wesley appeared on the scene and took charge of the meeting. The next day he preached in the evening, "and notwithstanding the rain, every man, woman and child stayed to the end" The next day he "made an end of visiting the classes, miserably shattered by the sowers of strange doctrine." The Predestinarian controversy was now rife; and the society in Wednesbury had been reduced from three hundred to seventy. Mr. Wesley's reflections on the subject may be quoted. "What a work would have been done in all these parts, if it had not been for doubtful disputations! If the Predestinarians had not thrown back those who began to run well, partly into the world, partly to the Baptists, and partly into endless disputes concerning the secret counsels of God! When we carried our lives in our hands, none of these came near; the waves ran too high for them; but when all was calm, they poured in on every side, and bereaved us of our children."

In March 1752, Mr. Wesley again preached in Wednesbury, "where in spite of all the wiles of Satan, and the cunning craftiness of men, the plain, genuine Gospel runs and is glorified." He is encouraged in 1755. He says "We have indeed preached the Gospel here with much contention, but the success overpays the labour." After preaching on Sunday afternoon, April 5th, he felt a "solemn awe" resting upon the society, which he met in the evening.

In 1756 both the brothers seem to have visited the town. It was a time of much rain and great floods, and Wesley found toil and inconvenience in travelling. Saturday, 21st August. "About eight we reached Wednesbury, tired enough."

The year 1760 marks a new era in the history of Wednesbury Methodism, as the first chapel was built and consecrated to the Divine service. Wesley says nothing about the building, but his remarks betoken much satisfaction with the people.

Tuesday, 4th. "In the evening I preached at the New House at Wednesbury. Few congregations exceed this either in number or seriousness. At five in the morning the congregation far exceeded the morning congregation at the Foundry, (the London Preaching House). Indeed hunger after the Word has been from the beginning the distinguishing mark of this people."

At his next year's visit the house could not contain the vast multitude that flocked to his services. The record from the journal is deeply interesting. Date: Sunday, March 15th, 1761. "I made a shift to preach at eight in the morning, but in the afternoon I knew not what to do, having a pain in my side and a sore throat. However, I resolved to speak as long as I could. I stood at one end of the house, and the people (supposed to be eight or ten thousand) in the field adjoining. I spoke from 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' When I had done speaking my complaints were gone. At the lovefeast in the evening many, both men and women, spoke their experience in a manner which affected all that heard." One in particular and all his house, wife and seven children, rejoiced in God their Saviour. After visiting Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton and Dudley, Mr. Wesley returned to Wednesbury and speaks of a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "In the evening I could scarce think but more than one heard Him say, 'I will, be thou clean.' Indeed so wonderfully was He present till near midnight (it was probably a Watchnight Service) as if He would have healed the whole congregation."

Wesley's next visit was in 1764, concerning which we read

under date Saturday, March 24th, "We came once more to our old flock at Wednesbury. The congregation consisted almost entirely of such as had repented, if not also believed the Gospel. Sunday, 25th. At eight I preached in the Room, though it would by no means contain the congregation; but the north-east wind was so extremely sharp that it was not practicable to preach abroad. At five there was such a congregation as I have not seen since I left London. But I found my voice would have commanded twice the number while I declared 'The Word is nigh thee,' &c."

In 1767 Wesley was again in Wednesbury, which he "reached with difficulty, for my horse, which I left in October to rest for six months, had been rode all the winter and was now galled, jaded and worn to skin and bones." It is not quite clear from the entry that Mr. Wesley left the horse in the care of the Wednesbury Society, though Mr. Tyerman so understands it, and has used vigorous language in denouncing this act of cruelty.

In March 1768 Wesley proclaimed the Word "near the preaching house in Wednesbury. The north wind cut like a razor, but the congregation, as well as I, had something else to think of."

In March 1770 Wesley preached in the "house" a funeral sermon for Elizabeth Longmore, of whom some account will be given in a subsequent chapter.

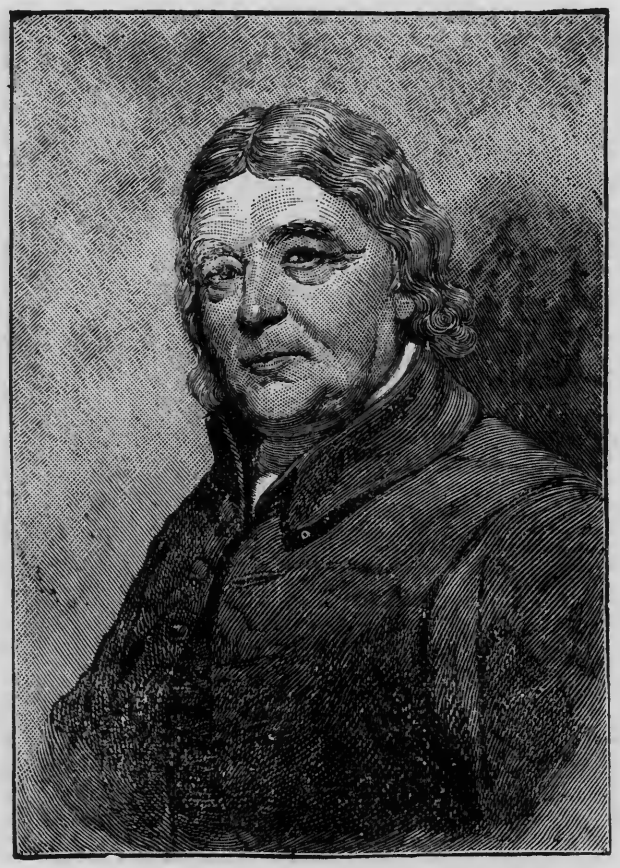
Five years later he improved the death of Sarah Wood, one of the first members of the society. At this visit he speaks of a crowded service and of a lovefeast, when many spoke without reserve.

The 27th visit was paid on March 27th, 1787, when he "took knowledge of the ancient spirit, although many of our first hearers are gone to rest."

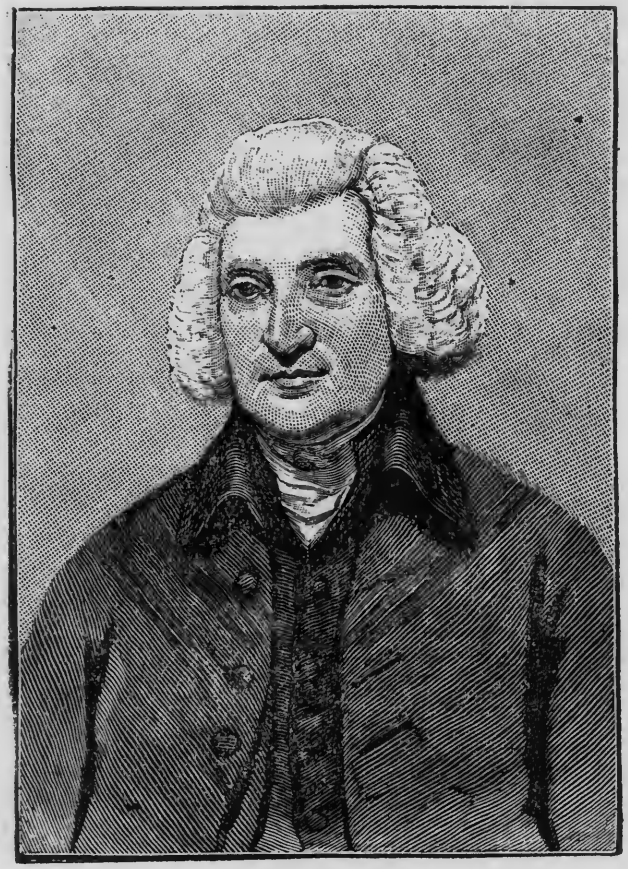
The record of his next visit contains interesting reflections on the changes he had witnessed. March 26th, 1788 "I went into Wednesbury, the mother society of Staffordshire. But few of the old standers are left; I think but three out of three hundred and fifteen. However, a new congregation is sprung up, though hardly equal to the former."

Wesley's last sermon in Wednesbury was preached on March 22nd, 1790. He was then eighty-seven years of age. His natural force was abating; his eye growing dim; his snow-white locks falling on his shoulders; his countenance retaining its calm and peaceful expression. This is the entry—"I went to our old friends at Wednesbury, where the work of God greatly revives. Business has exceedingly decreased, and most of them have left the town. So much the more have the poor grown in grace and laid up treasure in heaven. But we were at a great loss in the evening. I could not preach abroad after sunset, and the house would not near contain the people. However, as many as possibly could squeezed in; and their labour was not in vain."

For forty-seven years had the great evangelist gone in and out amongst the people of Wednesbury, and he retained his affection for them to the last. It is pleasing to note that his last visit gave joy and satisfaction to his heart.



REV. ALEXANDER MATHER,
Superintendent of the Staffordshire Circuit, 1760 and 1775.
President of the Conference in 1792.



REV. JOHN PAWSON,
Superintendent of the Staffordshire Circuit, 1768.
President of the Conference in 1793 and 1801.

Chapter III.

CIRCUIT BOUNDARIES.

AS the "Mother Society" of the district it is almost beyond question that Wednesbury was the head of what was known as "The Staffordshire Circuit." The first mention we can find of the circuit is in the Conference notes of the Rev. John Jones for the year 1749. The question was asked "How many circuits are there now?" The answer was "nine." Staffordshire stood sixth on the list and included "Stroud, Cirencester, Hanley, Evesham, Wednesbury, Leominster, Shrewsbury and Nottingham." A pretty wide area! No wonder that the ministers of those days were termed "round preachers!"

The first mention of the preachers' names occurs in the notes of the Conference of 1752, when the number of circuits had increased to thirteen, and the preachers appointed to Staffordshire were John Jones and W. Fugill. From the year 1765 the minutes of the conference were regularly published, and the preachers' names given, but the tabular statement of membership did not appear till 1767. The number of members in Staffordshire for that year was 906. The circuit had some of the most notable preachers of the Wesley period appointed to it, some of whom we know resided in Wednesbury. Alexander Mather, who travelled the circuit in 1760 and returned to it in 1775, was a hard-headed Scotchman, who suffered much for the Gospel, and in his ministry earnestly preached the blessing of entire sanctification. He so commended himself to his brethren as to be elected president of the conference in 1792, two years after Wesley's death. He speaks of the growing

prosperity of the work in Staffordshire.

Thomas Hanby was another worthy who was made president in 1794. He travelled the circuit on three several occasions.

John Pawson, of whom an interesting sketch appears in "The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers," spent one year in the circuit. He took a prominent part in the discussions and arrangements consequent on the death of Wesley, and on two several occasions occupied the presidential chair.

That the superintendent of the Staffordshire circuit resided in Wednesbury may be gathered from the biography of Thomas Taylor. He came to the town in 1777 and his experience was not of the brightest. He says "I removed to Wednesbury. I found the house bare of furniture, the circuit poor and trade bad; so that it was hard to put things in order. The societies dull and the congregations miserably small. Calvinism, Antinomianism and downright Ranterism have laid waste this country, that there were small hopes of doing good. To me this was a trying and bitter season, going round and round, and seeing no good effect." However, with the new year the work revived and ere its completion he rejoiced over near two hundred who had been added to the societies. He also attained to the presidency. It is a remarkable fact that of the first six presidents of the conference after Wesley's death, four had been superintendents of the Staffordshire circuit.

Amongst those who attended the services at Wednesbury in the time of Mr. Mather's ministry was the youthful Francis Asbury, destined to play such a conspicuous part in the planting of Methodism in America. He resided in the parish of Handsworth. Anxious to know something of the people called Methodists, he visited the town and was impressed with what he saw and heard. "The people were so devout,—men and women kneeling down—saying Amen. The preacher had no prayer book, yet he prayed wonderfully; he took his text and no sermon book; thought I, this is wonderful indeed." He and a friend attended the Wednesbury services for some

time and listened to Mr. Mather's fervent invitations to penitents "to believe *now*; to come to Christ now." In his 16th year he rejoiced in conscious salvation, joined a class at West Bromwich, met in band at Wednesbury, and soon began to preach. Thus was matured the Christian life and character of one who did for America what Wesley did for England. He was ordained as Bishop when thirty-nine years of age. "It has been estimated that in his American ministry he preached 16,500 sermons. travelled 270,00 miles, presided in no less than 224 annual conferences, and ordained more than 4000 preachers."

Amongst Asbury's youthful companions was RICHARD WHATCOAT, who also was called to play an important part in the organization of American Methodism, and was eventually raised to the office of Coadjutor Bishop. Whatcoat came to reside in Wednesbury in 1757, joined the society in the year following, was blessed under the earnest preaching of the day, and became one of the most saintly men that ever lived. God indeed placed honour on Wednesbury Methodism in the conversion and training of such men!

An incident related in the Wesleyan Magazine for 1857, must be referred to an early period in the history of the Staffordshire circuit. It occurred during the time of Mr. Ransom's appointment. He was requested to visit a young woman said to be possessed of an evil spirit. He went. After making certain inquiries he ascertained that the visitation was of an extraordinary character. Believing it to be satanic, he said, "Jesus Christ shall cast thee out, thou unclean spirit." "No, he shall not," was the reply, followed by horrid imprecations. Before engaging in prayer on her behalf, Mr. Ransom gave out the verse "Jesus the name high over all, &c." Whilst singing the first lines the snare was broken, deliverance came, and the poor woman burst into a song of rapture and praise.

In the year 1782, the "Staffordshire circuit" disappears from the minutes of conference, and in its place the larger towns of the district appear as heads of circuits: Birmingham in 1782,

Wolverhampton in 1787, Dudley in 1794. Wednesbury probably continued in the Birmingham circuit till 1801, when it became a circuit town; the appointed preachers being Robert Miller and Richard Winke, with a membership of 436. The earliest local records date from 1804. In this old church book the names of all the members in each place in the circuit are carefully written and numbered.

The following is a copy of the summary for June Quarter, 1804:—

Wednesbury	...	157	Cannock Wood	...	22
Walsall ...	...	85	Brereton ...	...	15
Darlaston ...	...	140	Brownhills ...	...	5
Bradley ...	...	92	Wyrley Bank	...	6
Horseley Heath	...	24	Bloxwich ...	...	28
Barr ...	...	19	Princes End	...	36
		Total	... 629		

R. Miller, Superintendent.

The oldest plan of the circuit that we have been able to procure has been lent us by Mrs. Onions, widow of Mr. David Onions, for many years a useful local preacher. It is a curiosity in its way. Though a six months' plan its dimensions are but $8\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Its date October 1817 to 1818. Ministers, Hutton and Fletcher, with twenty local preachers. The following is the list of places on the plan, with the number of members attached:—

Wednesbury	...	200	Bloxwich...	...	24
Darlaston	...	120	Ocker Hill	...	109
Walsall ...	...	59	Walsall & Daw End		—
Great Bridge	...	138	Wyrley ...	...	21
Gospel Oak	...	80	Hill Top...	...	—
Willenhall	...	36	Pelsall ...	...	—
Bradley ...	...	78	Lichfield...	...	—

Total, 865.

Judging from the returns of membership the circuit made rapid progress. The 436 members with which it started in

1801 had increased in 1822 to 1400, and in 1835 to 2540. The Conference of the last year named made Walsall the head of a new circuit, and took with it Bloxwich and places adjacent.

From the plan of 1837, lent by Mr. Corbett, the Wednesbury circuit embraced the following places, the numbers following representing the membership at the time :—

Wednesbury	...	414	Swan Village	...	56
Darlaston	...	397	Wood Green	...	11
Bradley ...	...	302	Moxley ...	...	—
Great Bridge	...	206	Wednesbury Field		—
Gospel Oak	...	128	Heath ...	...	—
Hill Top	...	224	Pleck ...	...	—
Ocker Hill	...	212			

Total, 1950.

In 1862 the membership of the circuit was 2160. At the conference of this year the circuit was again divided into First, Wednesbury (Spring Head), and Second, Wednesbury (Wesley) now known as West Bromwich (Hill Top) the former retaining three ministers and 969 members, and the latter three ministers and 1347 members. Both circuits have been affected by depression of trade and adverse circumstances, and at the last conference, while there had been no reduction of ministers, the membership had declined, in the case of Wednesbury circuit to 688, and of Hill Top to 707.

Chapter IV.

METHODIST CHAPELS.

The Meeting House.

IT would be interesting to know where the Methodists worshipped before the erection of the first Chapel. Doubtless some preaching room was provided in which their services were statedly held. Our investigations on this point have not resulted in the least item of information. Almost equally fruitless have been our inquiries in regard to the sanctuary erected in the year 1760. It stood in Workhouse Lane, afterwards and still known as *Meeting Street*, probably because it contained the *Meeting House*, as dissenting places of worship were frequently called. It was situated exactly opposite to Lloyd Street. It is said to have been a square building, to have contained a gallery, and to have seated 350 persons. It was in this "House," as we have seen from the journals, that John Wesley occasionally preached. More frequently when weather permitted he was compelled to address the assembled multitude in the open air. On the disuse of the Chapel, it was turned into a kind of foundry, and being damaged by mining operations, it was taken down in the year 1849. It was superseded by a building of much greater pretensions.

The first Spring Head Chapel

commenced in 1812. Its dimensions were 55 feet in length by 45 feet in breadth. It seated 620 persons. The building cost £3,300, and as £2,700 was borrowed it would appear that but £600 were raised at the time. Great was the faith of our

fathers in what their children would do! On May 13th, 1813, it was consecrated to Divine Service. The collections for the day were £230. The preacher, the renowned Rev. Joseph Benson, was entertained by Mr. Dado Adams in High Street. It is said that while at supper the floor gave way, and that the guests were precipitated into the cellar beneath. Great interest and enthusiasm prevailed amongst our people, as we may judge from the fact that by the next morning every pew was let, save those probably reserved for the poor, and a quarter's rent paid in advance. The chapel was lighted by candles. Five chandeliers were raised and lowered by pulleys and weights; the centre one holding thirty-six candles and the others six each. By a resolution of the trustees, Charles Adshead Loxton, Esq. and Joshua Booth, Esq. were appointed *to snuff the candles!* an office that became extinct in the year 1828 on the introduction of gas. In 1827 several improvements were effected, including a large pew for the accommodation of instrumentalists and vocalists. The brass and stringed instruments continued to lead the singing for the next thirty years, when their reign came to an end by the introduction of an organ. Of this chapel there is a handsome photograph in the preachers' vestry, presented to the trustees by Dr. Dingley. Contiguous to it stood the minister's house. At the time when this chapel was built the population of Wednesbury was about 5000. It is said there was then only one good street in the town and one set of ironworks; and that the only other places of worship were the Old Parish Church and what is now the Baptist Chapel. The last sermon was preached by the Rev. Samuel Simpson, from Daniel xii, 3,—"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, &c." The collections on behalf of the building fund of the new chapel were £41 0s. 5d.

Wesley Chapel, Holyhead Road.

With the advance of the coal and iron trade in Wednesbury, and the consequent increase of the population, there was a

corresponding growth of the congregation at Spring Head. About the time of the cholera visitation the numbers were so large that it became needful to provide additional accommodation. The enlargement of the chapel was suggested, and for a time seriously contemplated, but it was eventually decided to build a chapel in Holyhead Road, which should bear the name of the founder of Methodism.

The scheme took shape in 1849 and in May 1850 the building was opened by Dr. Newton. The services that followed were conducted by Dr. Dixon, Revs. J. Clapham, J. Roberts, Tarr, and Dr. Melson. The building is said to have cost some £1,200. In 1884 a further sum of £565 was spent on an organ, heating apparatus, and other improvements. The debt of £600, which for years remained on the premises, was happily paid by the legacy of the late Mrs. Ashmore. Being free from this obligation, the present trustees decided in 1893 to effect a much needed renovation of the premises. A new portico was added to the front, while the interior arrangements were entirely remodelled. At an expenditure of £1,130 the sanctuary has been made bright and beautiful. The windows were the gift of Alderman Williams and Alderman E. Hunt.

While the cause at Wesley has had a varied experience and has sometimes suffered from depression, yet it has proved a great blessing to the neighbourhood, both in an educational and religious point of view. When the Wednesbury circuit was divided in 1862 it was transferred to what is now the West Bromwich (Hill Top) circuit. We question the wisdom of the arrangement, and believe that a united Wesleyan Methodism in the town would have been the wiser policy, and would have yielded better results.

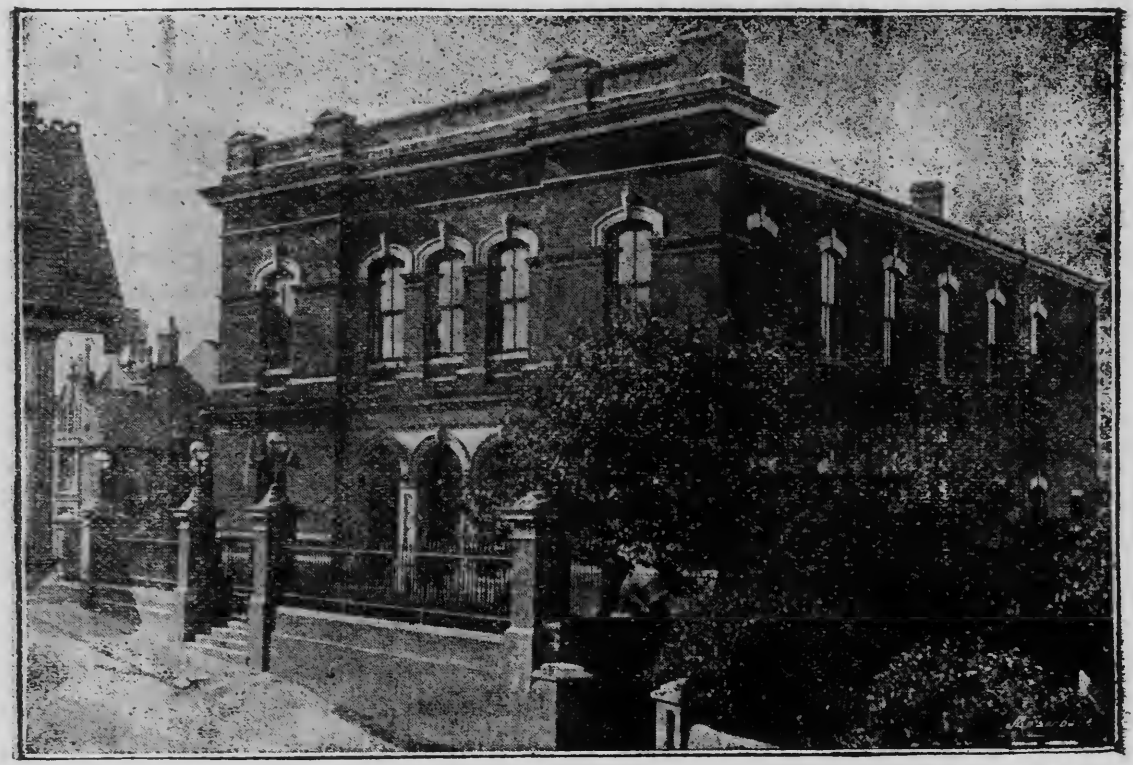
The Chapel in New Town.

A further effort to meet the religious needs of the district was made in 1861 by the erection of a School-Chapel in Mesty Croft, now Elwell Street, New Town. Land was procured

from Mr. Cookson at the cost of £66 12s. 6d. The foundation stone was laid by Thomas Davis, Esq., himself and his son contributing £35 to the building fund. The architect was Mr. Loxton; the contractors, Messrs. Trow and Sons. The Revs. T. A. James and H. Fish took part in the opening services. The total cost incurred was about £500.

At first there seemed the promise of considerable success, as the income from pew rents for the year 1862 is returned at £12, and £5 was paid as rent from the Sunday School; but by the year 1880 the cause had so declined that the trust account shewed a deficit of £30 due to the treasurer, and at a special meeting of the trustees, Rev. J. Binns in the chair, it was decided to dispose of the premises to the best advantage. The local preachers' meeting deprecated such a step being taken; a new working committee was formed, and the shame of disposal avoided.

For some years the place has been worked on Mission lines, pew rents have been abolished, and at the present time a successful Sunday School, Band of Hope, and Adult Bible Class are carried on, some twenty members meet in classes, and though £113 debt rests on the premises, we trust good work for the Master will still be done in that needy locality.



THE SECOND SPRING HEAD CHAPEL.

Notwithstanding the enlarged accommodation for the increasing population of the town, and of those who desired the ministrations of Methodism, the time arrived when the Spring Head trustees decided to supersede the structure of 1813 by a building of larger size and greater pretensions, one more adapted to the needs of the times and the requirements of the church. Arrangements were made for the continuance of the services in the schoolroom, and early in 1867 the demolition of the chapel and minister's house commenced.

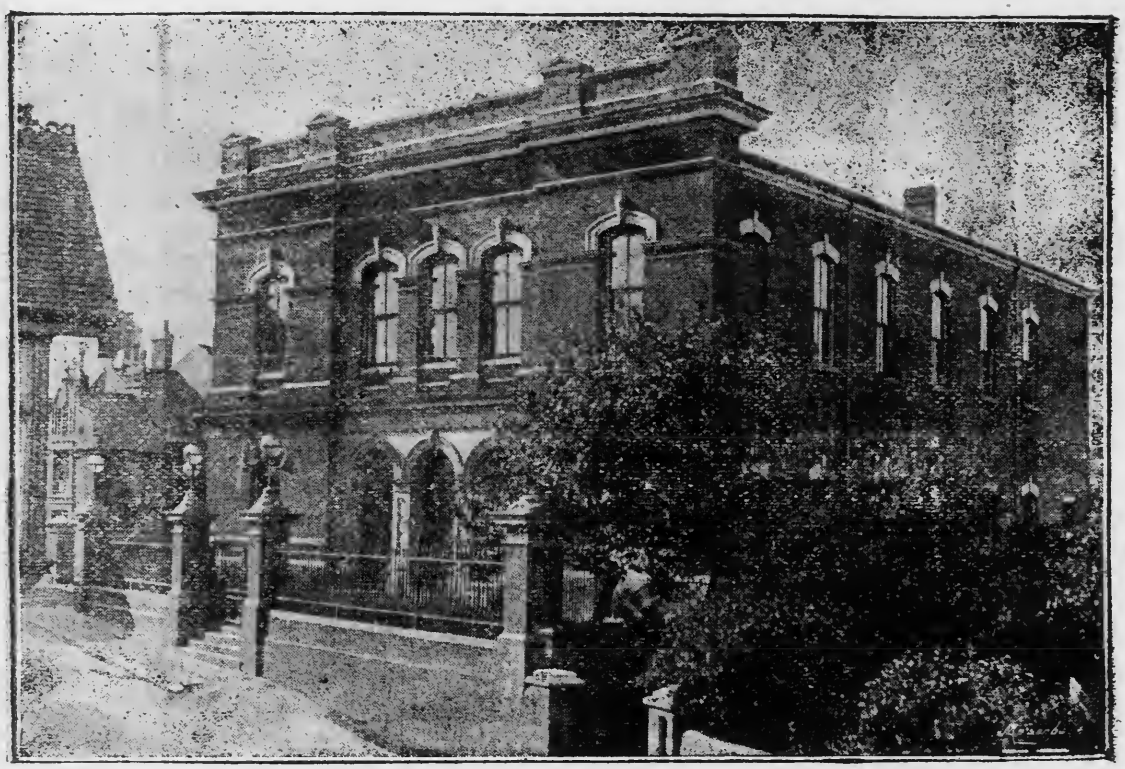
On April 15th the memorial stones of the new building were laid by Henry Mills, Esq., of Ocker Hill, and Isaac Jenks, Esq. of Wolverhampton. The occasion was one of great interest. Six hundred children of the Day and Sunday Schools, adorned with ribbon-suspended medals, took their place on the platform erected for their accommodation. A second platform was

erected for the adults. The proceedings were opened by the Rev. J. Relph, who gave out hymn 737; Rev. S. H. Morton read a portion of scripture; Rev. J. C. Wright offered prayer: Mr. Samuel Loxton read a document, detailing sundry facts in the history of the church, which with papers, coins, and photographs were deposited under the first stone.

Mr. Mills, having been presented with a silver trowel, richly chased and suitably inscribed, laid the stone in the name of the Trinity, and in the address which followed he gave some particulars relating to the history of Wesleyanism in the town. He had ascertained that Francis Ward resided in Holyhead Road, near the Baptist Chapel. The old Meeting House was situated near to a notable cock-pit. The foundation stones of the old Spring Head Chapel were laid by Mrs. Morley, wife of the Rev. George Morley, and by Miss Hame, who afterwards became the wife of the Rev. John Mason, so long the Book steward of the Connexion. When the Meeting House was disposed of, there remained a surplus of £200, which was distributed to the poor of the parish. Mr. Mills, in concluding, handed a cheque for £100 to the superintendent minister.

In connection with the laying of the east stone, Mr. John Loxton read the document prepared for deposition, and Mr. Jenks, having had presented to him a silver trowel, proceeded to lay the stone. In the course of his remarks he traced the connection of his family with the church at Spring Head; he congratulated his old friends on their spirit and enterprise, and had much pleasure in contributing £100 to the building fund.

Mrs. Mills and Mrs. Jenks were presented with silver medals, struck for the occasion, on one side of which was a well executed relief of the chapel, and on the other a plain inscription. An eloquent and appropriate address was given by the Rev. John Hall. Seventy Sunday scholars deposited purses on the stones, containing £42. Some three hundred sat down to tea, and at the public meeting which followed, James Slater, Esq., of Darlaston, presided, and stirring speeches were given



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by Revs. G. Follows, W. Naylor, and S. Coley. The financial receipts for the day were £310.

The architects were Messrs. S. and J. Loxton; the contractors were Messrs. Trow & Sons. Though many details remained for completion, the building was sufficiently advanced for the formal dedication on November 12th, 1867. The Rev. W Arthur, M.A., preached twice on the occasion in the chaste and forcible style, accompanied with spiritual power, for which his ministry was remarkable. The dedicatory prayer was one of much fervour and unction. The afternoon text was "In my Father's House are many mansions." At the evening service the spacious sanctuary was well filled, and presented an imposing appearance. Mr. Arthur based his discourse on the words—"How can these things be?" He referred to several features of Methodist testimony and belief, such as regeneration, sudden conversions, revivals of religion, and delivered a discourse as remarkable for simple, earnest, and beautiful diction, as it was for convincing power and sanctified devotion.

An augmented choir, under the leadership of Mr. Groves, rendered "Lift up your heads," and the "Hallelujah" chorus, with taste and effect.

The opening services were continued on successive Sundays, the preachers engaged and the amounts raised being as follows:

Rev. W. Arthur, M.A.	...	£131	11 7
,, S. Romilly Hall	...	70	2 0
,, S. Coley	...	54	7 5
,, J. E. Workman	...	57	14 1
,, J. Bedford ...	...	46	13 2
		£360	8 3

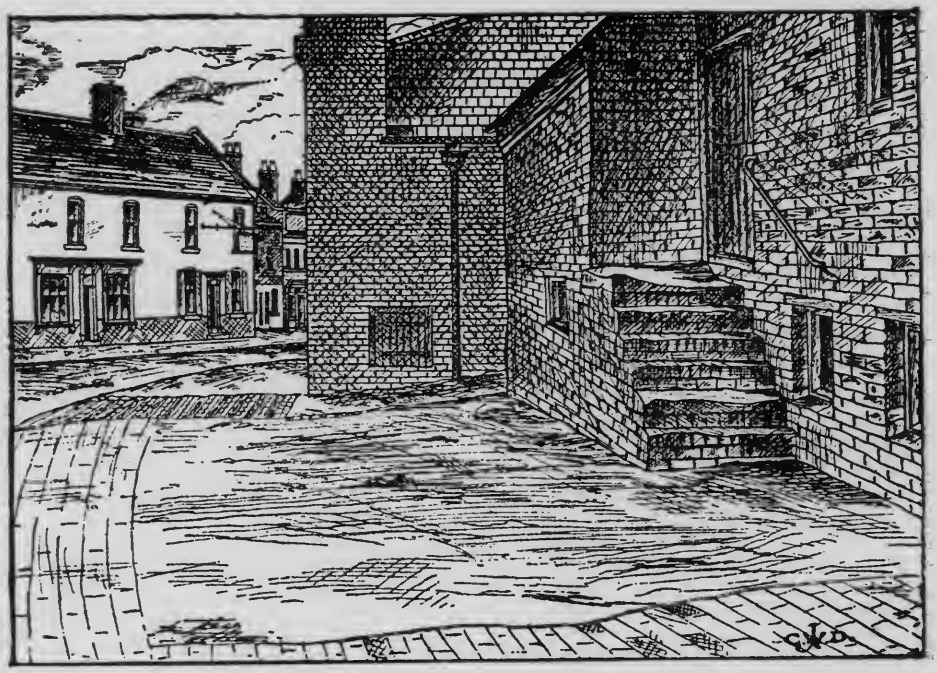
The building is in the Italian style, somewhat plain in exterior but commodious and well appointed within. The pulpit is a fine piece of workmanship.

The dimensions of the chapel are 88 × 60 feet; its sitting accommodation for 1156. The total cost was £3711 16s. 9d.,

towards which nearly £3000 had been raised when the building account was closed. A deficit remained of £715, to which must be added the debt on the old premises of £1230.

A committee was formed to provide a suitable organ in the place of the smaller one used in the former building. In the course of two years a fine instrument was procured at an expense of £682 19s. It was opened on October 13th, 1869.

Various efforts have been made for the reduction of debt, and notwithstanding large amounts spent on the enlargement of the school premises opposite, to which we may refer in a future chapter, the amount of debt at the present time stands only at £450.



Chapter V.

THE HORSE BLOCK.

NO account of Wednesbury Methodism would be complete without some reference to the celebrated Horse Block, which for many years served as an out-door pulpit from which John Wesley and others preached the Gospel.

To the kindness of Mr. R. Ryder we are indebted for a picture of the Block in its original position.

The following description is taken from *Ryder's Annual* for 1892:—

"The Horse Block stood in the High Bullen. It was used, as many old inhabitants have testified, by all kinds of travellers, by women as well as men, riding horse back to the market with their country produce and wares; and has been a familiar

object to many generations of townspeople. It was early seen what an advantageous platform it provided for an open-air preacher. In the unusually large space, and on the gently rising ground, there was accommodation for a congregation of several thousand persons. Mr. Wesley, it is believed, preached his first Horse Block sermon during his fourth visit, on the morning of Thursday, October 20th, 1743, the memorable day of the great riot. His brother Charles and their fellow-helper, George Whitefield, have, probably, both used the Horse Block for their pulpit. Many of these early leaders of Methodism have stood upon it to preach 'Christ and Him crucified.' All the religious leaders in all churches in this neighbourhood have stood around it to worship. It became specially the rallying ground for the Methodists. No Festival was complete without a service at the Horse Block, as at the Centenary celebration in 1849, when the the Sunday Schools and Methodists from all the district assembled. In the century and a half since Wesley first preached there, the High Bullen has many hundreds of times rung with the voices of praise, and silent multitudes have listened while the preacher, standing on the Horse Block, has proclaimed 'the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.'"

The removal of the Block being rendered necessary by the extension of the Crown Tube Works, it was kindly handed over by the Company to the Wesleyans of the town. The interesting memorial now stands in the front of Spring Head Church. It is enclosed by a neat iron railing and has the following inscription:—

First visit, 1743. Last visit, 1790.

From this Horse Block John Wesley often preached. It originally stood in the High Bullen, and was re-erected here in 1891.

"The best of all is God is with us."

First Chapel, 1760. Present Chapel, 1867.

On the Sunday prior to its removal, August 23rd, 1891, a memorable service was held in the High Bullen, at which some

three or four thousand were present, including several Anglican and Wesleyan ministers and other leading inhabitants of the town. The day was auspiciously fine. We present an abridged account of the service from the *Herald*.

The service commenced with the singing of a hymn. The Rev. F. S. Kirkness then read Psalm xlvi, after which the Rev. J. C. Nattrass offered up prayer.

The Rev. J. Marratt delivered an address, in the course of which he said, he might remark how beautiful were the feet which in old days stood on this stone. Those feet had trodden the dim labyrinths of American woods, and they left a trail of light on this country, from the torn rocks of the Cornish coast to the pines of the Scottish highlands. They were the feet of a man so benevolently aggressive, that he would not have his parish limited by any boundaries save those of the equator and the poles. . . . . The very sight of the stone ought to impel them to renewed activity in the name of their divine Master. Great historical memories gathered round the coronation stone in Westminster Abbey. Those who saw it were reminded of the days when it was in Scone Palace, and how the old Scottish monarchs sat on it, when the crown was put on their heads. They thought of its connection with English monarchs, and how, more than fifty years since, a fair young girl, named Victoria, sat on it to receive the homage of a great and free people. This stone had not those royal associations, but numbers yet unborn would see it as they entered or left the Spring Head Chapel, and be reminded of the brave little man who preached from it, in simple words, truths which were not only a power in Wednesbury, but throughout the land. They would be reminded of days of tumult now happily passed away, and of long years of prosperous labour in the grandest cause to which human beings could devote their powers. They would not wear the stone thin with devotional kisses, but they would reverence it as the memorial of a man, of whom it was enough to say that his name was John Wesley.

The Vicar of Wednesbury, Rev. J. Eckersley, said it afforded

him the greatest possible pleasure to accept the invitation of his Wesleyan friends to take part in that very interesting service. The man whose memory they re-called that day was engaged in a work which might well teach all Christians a most important lesson. It was that no historic position, no perfection of organisation, would justify a church in omitting to put forth extraordinary efforts to evangelise the masses. There was always a danger that a church, which gathered around itself the advantages that art and culture supplied, might rest contented with ministering to those who were already converted to Christ. In Wesley's days numbers were outside the boundaries of Christianity. He toiled and travelled more than almost any man for a thousand years before him, to win those masses of people to Christ. He (the speaker) trusted they would all have more and more of that spirit, and, when once they had it, they must take care not to allow the advantages which accrued to an established order of things, to deprive them of a yearning for souls that were still outside. These stones, when removed, would be a standing memorial to the great evangelistic work of John Wesley, and a reminder of the necessity still remaining for active and earnest labour in the Christianising of the masses.

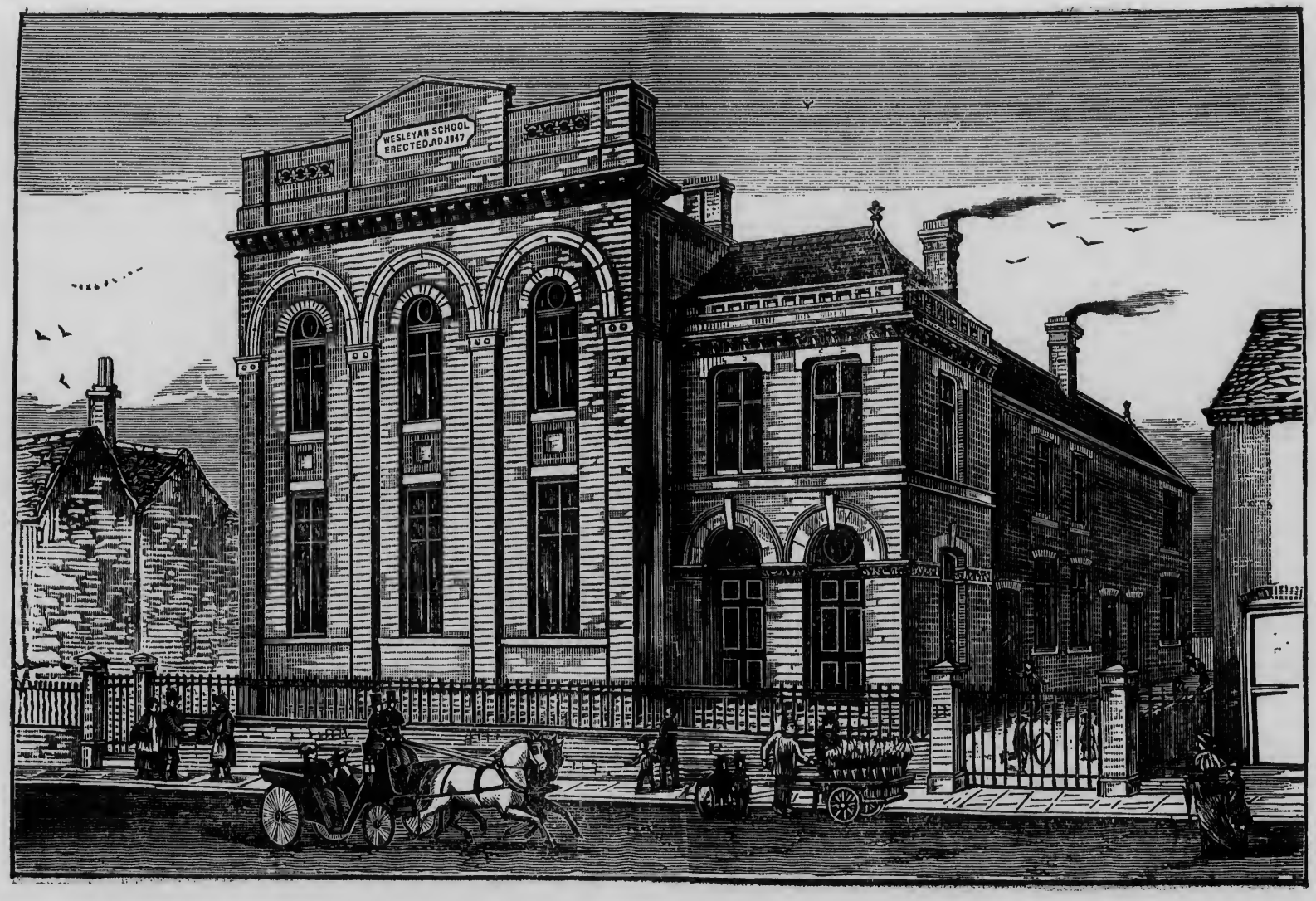
The Rev. B. Crosby, United Methodist Free Church minister, then delivered an address, in the course of which he suggested the erection of a statue of Wesley on the block from which he used to preach in person.

The Rev. J. McTurk, Superintendent of the Wednesbury circuit, said the birth-struggles of Methodism in the town dated as far back as 1743. It was born amid riot and persecution. In that year were heard in Wednesbury, and probably from that very spot, the logical discourses of John Wesley, the poetic appeals of Charles, and the splendid and soul-moving oratory of George Whitefield. John Wesley recorded 27 visits to Wednesbury in his journal, and referred to having preached here at least 45 times, and probably he preached double that number of times. Around this stone, amongst those who listened to the founder and leader of Methodism, might have been seen

saintly Francis Ward, the hospitable host of the Wesleys, and himself a winner of many to Christ. Here also were to be found the devoted Elizabeth Longmore and Sarah Wood, both of whose memories were honoured by funeral sermons from John Wesley. And they ought not to forget that there was to be found Jane Whitehead, who was still commemorated by a gravestone in the parish churchyard, which told them that she was one of the first members of the society established by Revs. John and Charles Wesley. Out of the storm which attended the first movements of the great Methodist revival came great honours. It was in Wednesbury that Francis Asbury learned the spirit and discipline of early Methodism, and became fitted to be the pioneer Bishop of American Methodism. By him and others Wednesbury had done nobly in extending the kingdom of Christ in many parts of the world. John Wesley's earnestness was the fruit of personal experience of the grace of God. When he had, through faith in Christ, entered into the liberty of the children of God, like a true Christian patriot, he went everywhere offering to his fellow-countrymen the Gospel, which had become to him the power of God to his salvation. He believed, loved, and preached Christ, and gathered a people not for his own fame, but for the glory of the great Head of the Church. His people he was accustomed to describe as the "friends of all, the enemies of none." When he lay dying—100 years ago—he rallied his ebbing strength and cried, "The best of all is God is with us." The success of the Methodist church had been the evidence of God's indwelling and blessing. God's abiding presence, grace, and spirit, were the hope to-day of all the families of Methodism throughout the world.

Prayer, offered by the Rev. J. T. Binns, concluded the very interesting proceedings.

A collection taken during the course of the afternoon realised nearly £8, which was expended in the removal and re-erection of the Block.



DAY AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, SPRING HEAD.

Chapter VI.

METHODISM has not been unmindful of its relation to the young. The children have been her solicitude and care. That Wednesbury Methodists have spent money and pains on this branch of Christian work is evident from the substantial block of school buildings at Spring Head, a picture of which stands at the head of this chapter. They did not assume their present handsome proportions, without a series of progressive changes. The original premises appear to have been erected in 1823, and consisted of an upper and lower schoolroom. One still survives who was present at the opening, when, after marching round the town, the children were provided with dinner. In 1846 the trustees negotiated with the Sunday School Committee for the erection of new and more spacious buildings. Land and cottages were purchased. The old schoolroom and cottages were taken down. The contract price for the new premises was £690. Towards this amount the committee was required to pay £260, and to be responsible for the furniture required.

In course of time it was found that even these premises were insufficient to meet the growing requirements of our Day and Sunday Schools, and that there must be a further enlargement.

Some £1,611 were expended in the re-construction scheme, begun in 1884, the outcome of which was the present arrangement of lofty and well-appointed rooms, admirably adapted to the purpose for which they were built. Notwithstanding the increasing demands of the Educational Department of the country, they still meet the requirements of the H. M. Inspectors. To the public spirit and keen foresight of the men

who planned and erected this noble block, the Wesleyans of this generation are greatly indebted. Strenuous efforts were made for some years to reduce the amount spent on these improvements, until the entire sum was paid. A Bazaar in aid of the fund, held in 1886, realized £414 18s. 10d.

The friends at *Wesley* have also shewn their practical interest in educational affairs by the erection of an infant schoolroom in 1857, at a cost of £370, and an upper schoolroom in 1864, when the amount expended was £590. The Wesley Sunday School was honoured in having the Rev. Edward Smith as a scholar, and the Rev. C. Wenyon, M.D., our medical missionary in China, as a teacher.

From the *premises* let us glance at the *work* for which they were designed.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

As to the time when Sunday School work was taken up by the Wesleyans of the town we have no record. It was probably commenced in the first chapel in Meeting street, and on the sale of the premises transferred to Spring Head. Our search for authentic documents relating to the early history of the school has been without success. Doubtless secular instruction was largely combined with the religious, as was the the fashion and the need in the early part of the century. Traditions still linger as to one or two points of interest.

One relates to the almost Spartan discipline maintained, if we may judge by the *iron cage* provided for the incorrigible offenders. The writer first heard of this unique arrangement at a meeting in the West of England, when the present was being contrasted with the past. It was connected with the ceiling by pulley and rope. When the offender was placed between the bars and hoisted in the presence of the school, the object lesson may have carried terror to the minds of some, though possibly to others, of an adventurous turn of mind, it might excite emulation and desire. It is said that the last to go up, to the amusement of his comrades and the disgust of the teachers, crowed like a cock; and that henceforth this mode of

punishment was banished from the school.

Pleasanter it is to think of the grand festal season in those brave days of old, when the November tea-fight—or soiree, as we should now call it—was largely attended by those who had virtually paid half-a-guinea for the ticket of admission. All contributors to the school funds at the anniversary, or the prize-giving, received tickets at the rate named, in proportion to the amount given, and these they could use or dispose of, as they deemed best.

Notwithstanding that these terms were rigorously enforced, the room was generally crowded. It was almost a calamity not to be present at this annual celebration.

The prize-givings were connected with public examination in the catechism and scriptural knowledge, in which the children frequently did themselves and their teachers great credit. The prizes were not confined to books; hats, caps, neckties, bonnets, braces, and other articles were included, the first and most coveted prize being a canary and cage.

It is pleasing to find that some of the veterans of the school still survive, whose memory reverts to the days of forty or fifty years ago, when they were actively engaged in the work; amongst whom we may mention Messrs. G. Holloway, E. Oldbury, T. Washington, J. Hadley, J. Loxton, W. Lester, W. Blair, J. Stokes and others.

The Bridge Sunday School.

For a number of years a branch school was worked at the Bridge by members of the Spring Head church. It was commenced by Messrs. W. and J. Rigby, who for a time conducted it under their own roof. They afterwards built a room at their own expense in Globe street, where the school was carried on for years. The worthy brothers purchased a plot of land near by, in the hope that a school-chapel might be erected. But difficulties stood in the way and the project was abandoned. After the removal of the Rigbys the school was continued for a time. In 1880 it registered 141 scholars. In 1882 it was merged in the school at Spring Head.

Day Schools.

For some forty years the Wesleyans of the town, both at Spring Head and Wesley, have taken an active part in secular education. Mr. George Holloway was at the meeting of the first Day School committee held at Spring Head, and has continued a member of it to this time. Under the guidance of skilful masters and mistresses the schools have done work for the town and neighbourhood, which the Government has freely acknowledged in its annual reports and has sustained by grants in aid. The schools were probably never more efficient than they are to-day. Mr. and Mrs. Gaskill have been in charge of the schools at Spring Head since 1872, and Mr. Thomas Price has been the head master at Wesley since 1869.

The following statement from recent returns shews the present educational position of our Wesleyan churches in Wednesbury:

Name of School.	*Day Scholars.*	*Sunday Scholars.*
Spring Head ...	458 ...	292
Wesley ...	491 ...	203
New Town ...	— ...	150
Totals	949	645



MR. W. LESTER, SEN., Past President of A. B. C.



DR. DINGLEY, Present President of A. B. C.

Chapter VII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE ADULT BIBLE CLASS.

ONE of the modern developments of Christian labour is that of large Sunday afternoon classes, held in the sanctuary, and conducted on popular lines. The Bible readings and addresses are interspersed with lively songs, varied occasionally by a solo or duet, and sometimes by a musical service and a system of prize-giving. The Spring Head Church was amongst the first to adopt the plan. The seed of the class was sown by Mr. Blackham, of Hill Top, in a paper he read to the Mutual Improvement Society. Messrs. W. Lester and S. Beardmore were deputed to visit and report on the Adult Classes already in existence at West Bromwich. They were deeply impressed with the possibilities of their usefulness, and strongly recommended their adoption. Accordingly, at a leaders' meeting held March 24th, 1886, the class was officially constituted. Mr. W. Lester was appointed president, Dr. Dingley, vice-president, Messrs. S. Beardmore and E. Austin, secretaries, and Mr. G. Williamson, treasurer. The first meeting was held on April 11th. About 300 persons were present, 70 of whom enrolled their names as members, to which 40 were added on the following Sunday. The inaugural address was given by Mr. J. Beardsley, of Birmingham. The history of the class, its progress, methods, organization, usefulness, income and expenditure are faithfully chronicled in the eight printed annual reports. Each report contains an admirable resume of the year's proceedings and is adorned by a portrait of one of



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the officers, beginning with the first president. From these reports we gather that the culminating period of the class, when the spacious sanctuary was filled with members and friends on Sunday afternoons, was 1888-89, when 1,100 names were registered, and 785 prizes were distributed. The financial statement shewed the expenditure of the class to be £204 6s. 0d. of which £147 14s. 0d. were spent in prizes.

The distribution of so much healthy literature in so wide a circle is one of the phenomena of the movement, and has doubtless contributed to its success.

The class owes much to the organizing powers of Dr. Dingley, who became its president in 1890.

It is not surprising to find that after the novelty had worn off the attendance at the class should have declined. Besides, a number of similar classes have sprung into existence in the neighbourhood. The class now numbers some 600 members.

TEMPERANCE WORK.

While this branch of Christian service has not been neglected, its success has not been great. As in most parts of the Connexion, so in Wednesbury, the Band of Hope preceded the adult society. For some time the *Band of Hope* was carried on by Mr. Broughton independently of the Sunday school committee or teachers' meeting. But at a meeting held on February 14th, 1883, it was resolved "That the existing Band of Hope be connected with our Sunday school, that it be carried on according to Conference regulations, and be called the Spring Head Band of Hope." Since that time the work has been carried on with varying success. Of late the attendance has greatly improved.

Not till January 1893 was the *Adult Temperance Society* formed, with Dr. Dingley as its president, and Mr. G. Wilkin as secretary. It nas enrolled about a hundred members. We trust that these agencies for the training of our people and their children in temperance principles will not be the least useful of our Church institutions.

THE MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT CLASS,

or as we now term it, *The Institute*, has run a useful course for some years, and has been the means of intellectual and moral stimulus to many young persons. It does not command the attendance that its importance demands. Its being held on a Saturday evening and only in the winter months are somewhat adverse circumstances.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES.

For some years the experiment has been tried of providing bright and suitable services for the children on Sunday evenings. In winter these services are often rendered attractive by lantern pictures of sacred subjects. The upper schoolroom has frequently been crowded with children, in whose minds, through ear and eye, the good seed of the word has fallen. Doubtless the fruit of this "bread cast on the waters" will be "seen after many days."

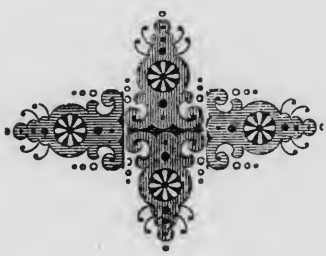
BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES.

Besides these agencies the Church has its *Foreign Missionary Committee*, under whose direction the yearly anniversary is held and a respectable amount raised. A useful auxiliary to this is the *Juvenile Branch* in connection with the Sunday School, which has frequently raised £30 per annum, the amount being divided between Home and Foreign Missions. Social and benevolent societies, mothers' meetings, ladies and dorcas sewing meetings, Church's poor fund, have been in operation for years, and have relieved distress and encouraged thrift.

OTHER METHODIST DENOMINATIONS.

Besides the Mother Church of the Wesleyans the doctrines and principles of the denomination are maintained by other Churches in the town. Independent of, and separate from the Old Body, they are one with it in spirit and in aim. Would that the time might soon come when we could sink our minor differences, and as in Canada, form one grand Methodist Church!

The Primitive Methodists have held their position in Wednesbury since 1812. They possess places of worship in Camp Street, Vicarage Lane, and Lea Brook. As the outcome of the Reform movement in 1849 a chapel was built in Ridding Lane, now connected with the *Free Methodist Church.* For some time the *New Connexion* had a chapel in Holyhead road, but the cause did not succeed and the building was disposed of.



Chapter VIII.

METHODIST WORTHIES.

IN presenting some biographical sketches of those who have adorned the Christian profession, we have been restricted in our choice to a few, of whom some printed memorial has been found. We doubt not that many of equal zeal and devotedness have lived and laboured in their day, of whom no such record has been preserved. Their record is on high; they will not fail of recognition and reward in the last day.

Our first reference will be to one who lived high in the esteem of John Wesley, from whose journal the particulars are taken.

Elizabeth Longmore.

Under date of March 18th, 1770, Wesley writes, "In the evening I preached in the House at Wednesbury a funeral sermon for Elizabeth Longmore. I think the first witness of Christian perfection whom God raised up in these parts. I gave some account of her experience many years ago. From that time her whole life was answerable to her profession, every way holy and unblameable. Frequently she had not bread to eat, but that did not hinder her 'rejoicing evermore.' She had close trials from her poor apostate husband, in the midst of sharp pain and pining sickness. But she was superior to all; still seeing her Father's hand, and 'in everything giving thanks.' Her death was suitable to her life. All was noonday. She praised God with every breath, till He took her to Himself."

We abridge the account Mrs. Longmore gave of herself, referred to in the above extract:—"I was born in 1730. My parents having died, I was brought up by the parish, and taught nothing, not so much as to read. About eleven years old I was

put out parish apprentice to a man and woman who used me very harshly. I wanted much to learn to read, but they would not spare the time. I was about fourteen when I heard Mr. J. W. preach at the Cross in Wednesbury. I immediately believed it was the right way, and begun to be very uneasy. My convictions wore away by degrees; though still I could not rest. About twenty I was married. My husband had sometimes heard the preaching, but not lately. Soon after he began again, going with me constantly. I was now more and more convinced that I was a guilty, undone sinner. I cried to God day and night, laying down my work many times a day. On Holy Thursday, 1756, I was sadly afraid of going to the sacrament. However, I broke through and went. At the Lord's table I found such a love as I cannot express. As soon as I came back, I went up into my chamber and kneeled down in prayer. In praying I heard a voice saying "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." My soul sunk into nothing before God and was filled with humble love. About a year and a half ago Mr. Fugill came. One evening while he was preaching I was convinced that I need to be wholly renewed. On Friday, January 25th, I took no food till the afternoon. I was much tempted to think I should never attain, and was quite uneasy. But the next morning my uneasiness was gone, and I calmly waited for what I believed God would soon give. In the evening I went to the preaching with a full expectation that he would meet me there. As soon as Mr. Fugill began to speak I felt my soul was all love. I was so stayed on God as I never felt before, and knew that I loved Him with all my heart. And the witness that God had saved me from my sins grew clearer every hour. I have never found my heart wander from God, He is never out of my thoughts; I see Him always. I do not only see Him, I feel Him too, so as I cannot express. And the more I see and feel of God, the more I feel I am nothing. I never find any heaviness or coldness; and when I must go among the people of the world, God is as much with me as before. I search my heart again and again and find nothing but love. Indeed I know if God left me a moment I should

fall. But I trust He will never leave me nor forsake me."

After referring to another person whose experience was of a similar kind, Mr. Wesley adds:—"I observe the spirit and experience of these two run exactly parallel. Constant communication with God the Father and the Son fills their hearts with humble love. Now this is what I always did, and do now, mean by perfection. And this I believe many have attained, on the same evidence that I believe many are justified. May God increase their number a thousand fold!"

Sarah Wood

is also favourably mentioned in Mr. Wesley's journal. "March 28th, 1785, I preached a kind of funeral sermon on Sarah Wood, one of the first members of the society. For about fifty years she adorned the Gospel, being a pattern of all holiness. She was confined to her bed for several months. Being asked if time did not hang upon her hands she answered 'No, the Bible is my delight.' 'How can that be,' said her friend, 'when you cannot see?' 'Very well,' said she, 'for the Lord brings it to my remembrance.' So without doubt or fear she delivered up her soul to her merciful and faithful Creator."

As a representative of modern Methodism we present our readers with a sketch of

Thomas Blackwood, M.D.,

compiled from the memorial pamphlet published in 1885, by Mr. Ryder, at the *Herald* office. Dr. Blackwood was born at Paisley, Scotland, on the 24th February, 1825. After receiving a good education, he entered the employ of the Monkland and Kirkintollock Railway Company as a clerk. When about twenty years of age he became a student of the Normal College of the Free Church of Scotland, where his strong intellectual powers were cultivated with honour to himself and the Institution. For a time he devoted himself to the scholastic profession, and under the auspices of the Wesleyan Education Committee, he for some years successfully conducted a Day School in Wolverhampton. In 1852 he returned to Scotland and with a

view to the medical profession, he became a student of the Andersonian University, Glasgow. He won the esteem of Dr. Hunter and other professors, who predicted for him a career of eminence. In 1854 he became assistant surgeon in the parishes of Girvan and Dalziel, during the cholera epidemic. In the following year he was appointed surgeon to the Loch Katrine contracts of the Glasgow Water Works. Here from two to three thousand men were employed in dangerous work, and his exertions for their welfare, both as a medical man and a Christian, were so appreciated by masters and men that they presented him with a gold watch, suitably inscribed, as a mark of their esteem. After some hospital experience in Birmingham in 1864 Dr. Blackwood settled in Wednesbury, where he soon became well known as a successful practitioner and a man of public spirit and enterprize. In connection with the Board of Guardians, the Local and School Boards, his benign and patriotic spirit was felt for several years.

It is however with him as a Wesleyan Methodist that we have to do. With that Church he heartily identified himself, and of it he was an earnest and hard-working member and class-leader for many years. He was distinguished as a lay preacher. On this subject the Rev. J. Dannatt said "to train him betimes for future service, the Lord touched his heart in early life, and at the age of seventeen we find him preaching his first sermon. From that time his zeal was like fire on the Jewish altar—it never went out. I may say that preaching was his delight. When in the pulpit there was a peculiar vehemence in his manner; but there was nothing of mere rant. His aim was to strike, to impress, to interest. His expressions were often tinged with quaintness, and full of point, for he loved plainness of speech, and by this means the poor had the Gospel preached unto them. For many years he served the Wednesbury circuit with great acceptance as one of its Circuit Stewards, and in this and other ways he was faithful in his generation. His benevolence was unbounded. Hundreds of times he has gone to the abodes of the destitute poor. He has sat beside them on their humble seat, hearing their simple and sorrowful story; cherishing them

in sickness, instructing, reproving, exhorting; sanctifying the whole with fervent prayer."

In somewhat failing health he was called to attend a serious case at Darlaston. While there he was suddenly seized with illness and had to be conveyed home. Rapidly becoming worse on the next day, November 12th, 1885, he passed away, at the age of sixty. His last conscious words were "I have given my life for another, but I have done my father's will." After a preliminary service in the Spring Head Church, which was filled with sympathising friends, his remains were conveyed to Wolverhampton and there interred, the officiating ministers being the Revs. E. D. Dannatt, H. Balls, and J. Chapple.

On the 29th November the Rev. E. Dannatt improved the event by preaching on the words, "I have fought a good fight," &c., and closed his discourse by a sketch of the deceased's life and character.—The Wesleyans of Wednesbury were favoured in that, as in the Primitive Church, they had a "beloved physician" among their active workers; a tradition which is still happily maintained in Dr. Blackwood's successor.

Mr. William Partridge.

The following summary of his career is taken from the Conference number of the *Methodist Times*:—

The subject of this sketch is a Methodist of the third or fourth generation. His father was a class-leader and an official of the Wednesbury circuit. Mr. Partridge was born at Darlaston in 1828. From his earliest years the Spirit of God strove powerfully with him, but it was not till the year 1848, during a revival in the circuit, that he yielded to the influences of the Spirit, and at once joined a class led by the late Mr. J. Perry, of Ocker Hill, where his parents then resided. After serving Messrs. Fox, Henderson & Co., of Smethwick, as an engineer, and Bolton, Watt & Co., of Soho, Birmingham, he received, in 1862, an appointment as chief engineer in the Peruvian Navy, and took out two steam gunboats for the government of that country, which

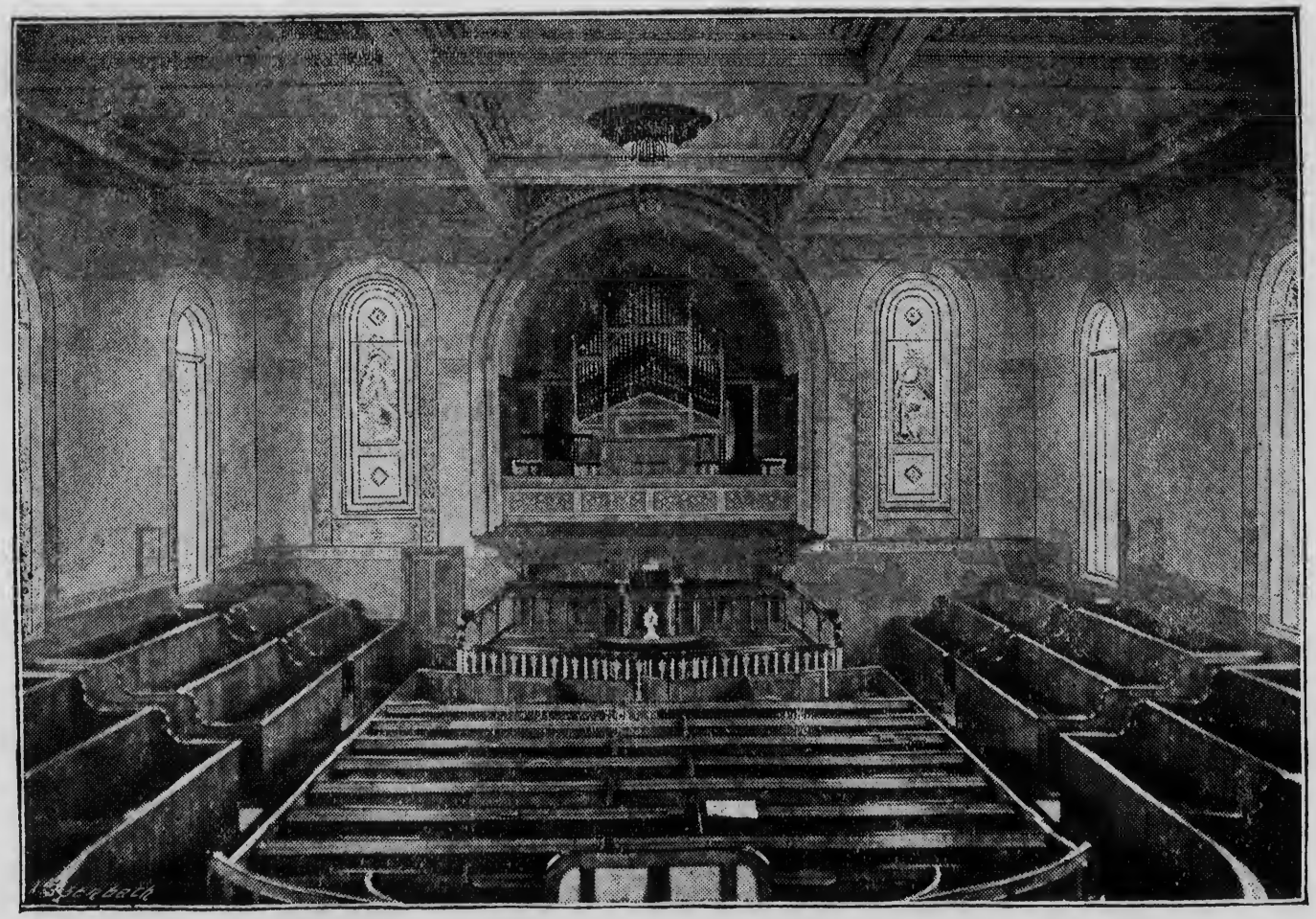
had been built in England, and which were destined for the great inland lake Titicaca. After remaining there for six years, Mr. Partridge returned to England in 1868, by way of Panama, West Indies, and the United States of America. Upon his return he settled at Smethwick, and at once joined the church there, where he was soon made Poor steward by the late Rev. Ishmael Jones, which office he retained until his removal to Wednesbury in 1871. Within two years he was appointed a leader, and in 1874 was elected Society steward; after holding this office for six years he was, in 1880, appointed Circuit steward, retaining that position continuously for twelve years. He is now a trustee of two chapels in the circuit, treasurer for the Wednesbury trustees, and circuit treasurer for foreign missions. In 1887 Mr. Partridge was elected the first lay representative to Conference from the Wednesbury circuit and attended the Manchester Conference.

This honour was repeated during the present year (1894) when he, in a like capacity, attended the Conference in Birmingham.

MR. JOSEPH STOKES,

Our senior Circuit Steward, was also chosen as a representative to the Conference recently held in Birmingham. The following outline of his career appeared in the *Methodist Recorder* at the time: —

"MR. JOSEPH STOKES was born at Wednesbury, February 9th, 1846, of godly Wesleyan parents, and educated at the local Wesleyan Day Schools. He entered the Westminster Training College in January, 1864, but a serious illness in 1865 compelled the reluctant resignation of his Queen's Scholarship. Mr. Stokes subsequently obtained a situation as clerk in a manufacturer's office, and then became manager, remaining altogether in the same employ for fourteen years. He is now in business for himself. He has had a lifelong connection with Sunday Schools, as scholar, teacher, secretary, and superintendent. He has also been a class-leader for many years, and is now senior circuit steward, and Secretary of the South Staffordshire Wesleyan Methodist Council. Mr. Stokes gladly acknowledges that he owes all his success, under God's blessing, to home teaching and example."



INTERIOR OF KING'S HILL WESLEYAN CHURCH,

From a Photograph by Mr. H. S. Smallman.

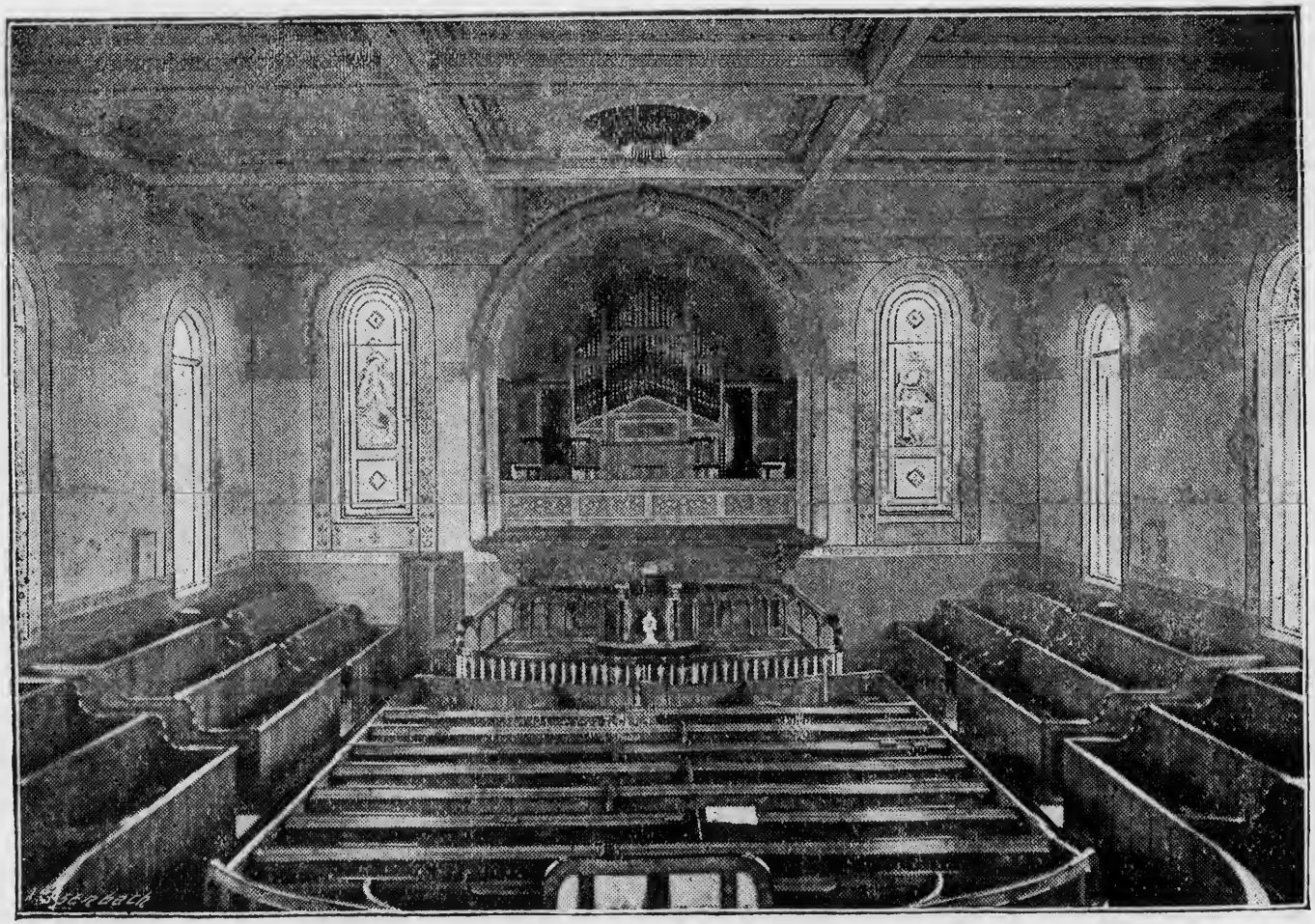
had been built in England, and which were destined for the great inland lake Titicaca. After remaining there for six years, Mr. Partridge returned to England in 1868, by way of Panama, West Indies, and the United States of America. Upon his return he settled at Smethwick, and at once joined the church there, where he was soon made Poor steward by the late Rev. Ishmael Jones, which office he retained until his removal to Wednesbury in 1871. Within two years he was appointed a leader, and in 1874 was elected Society steward; after holding this office for six years he was, in 1880, appointed Circuit steward, retaining that position continuously for twelve years. He is now a trustee of two chapels in the circuit, treasurer for the Wednesbury trustees, and circuit treasurer for foreign missions. In 1887 Mr. Partridge was elected the first lay representative to Conference from the Wednesbury circuit and attended the Manchester Conference.

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Chapter IX.

METHODISM AT KING'S HILL.

IN the earlier history of Methodism, King's Hill, being less thickly populated, and being within easy reach of Wednesbury and Darlaston, had no service of its own. But some time in the thirties of the present century, cottage preaching was commenced in the house of a widow named Page, and a class was formed and conducted by a leader from Darlaston. The services proved successful, and the friends on the spot soon contemplated the erection of a chapel. On application to the Quarterly Meeting sanction was at first refused. The ardent friends of the movement were resolved to proceed. Rev. T. Eastwood, Superintendent of the circuit at the time, intervened, and made such representations to a subsequent Quarterly Meeting, as to gain its approval. The chapel was accordingly built at a cost of £160, with accommodation for about 130 adults. It was opened on December 22nd, 1839, and was well attended from the first. The little cause advanced, notwithstanding some factious elements from within, and some bitter opposition from without. This arose from men of infidel principles connected with the Old Park Works, who did all in their power to hinder the work, but in vain. The class of 14 members was handed over to Mr. E. Smallman, who came to King's Hill in the year 1838, and identified himself with the cause from the very first. In December, 1841, there was a gracious revival of religion, and in January of the year following thirty-four persons were meeting in class. Mr. Reuben Carter was appointed as the leader of a second class. The work still prospering, other classes were formed, until the returns show 61 members under the care of five leaders. In

1848 it was found necessary to enlarge the chapel and to double the accommodation. Provision was made for seating 280 adults and the dedication service was conducted by Rev. W. Tarr. In those days the mines and ironworks were in the full swing of prosperity. The friends at King's Hill being zealous and faithful found the work of their hands established and fruitful, and in eight years' time the place had again become too strait for the accommodation of the worshippers. Various meetings were held to consider what steps should be taken, until on 21st July, 1856, the Trustees, under the presidency of the Rev. N. Rouse, decided to build a new chapel on the present site, to accommodate between 500 and 600 persons. At Easter, 1857, the foundation stone was laid by the late Thomas Davis, Esq., of Hill Top. On the Whitsuntide following a bazaar was held in the shell of the new building, at which nearly £400 was realized, and in October the completed edifice was opened under propitious circumstances, the preacher being the Rev. W. M. Punshon, M.A. The old chapel was sold to the Primitive Methodists. The present commodious schoolroom was erected in 1860, the foundation stone being laid by Sampson Lloyd, Esq. The organ was placed in the church in 1864. The cost of the whole, including caretaker's house, was upwards of £3000, the entire amount being raised. In 1891 the church was thoroughly renovated, its acoustic properties improved by a new ceiling; new windows were put in, including two of stained glass in memory of the late Mrs. Smallman. The whole was decorated in modern style, and the entire expense of £500 was met. The friends at King's Hill may be congratulated on their possession of such complete premises, the internal arrangements of the church with its rising gallery at the end of the building, and its very handsome rostrum and communion at the other, being somewhat out of the common line. Of the interior we are pleased to present an engraving by the kindness of Mr. Smallman.

In 1864 the membership of the church had increased to 135, many of whom were young people out of the school. The congregation and membership continued to be satisfactory until

1880. By this time five other places of worship had been opened on the ground from which our congregation was drawn, each with its Sunday school. This excessive competition considerably affected the number of Wesleyan adherents; and in addition, owing to the exhaustion of adjacent mines, and the decline of business, many left the neighbourhood.—The strong point of King's Hill Methodism has been its

SUNDAY SCHOOL,

its birthday being December 29th, 1839, on which day 97 scholars were enrolled. From that time to this it has been assiduously and successfully worked, and though, owing to the causes named, it has been impossible to maintain its numbers, yet even now, in face of much competition, it holds a creditable position. The following figures will give some idea of its past and present, seeing they represent the *average attendance*, and not the numbers enrolled.

1839	...	97.	1880	...	295.
1860	...	257.	1890	...	261.
1871	...	371.	1894	...	207.

In illustration of the punctuality and regular attendance of the scholars, it may be mentioned that during the last thirty years, the morning attendance has averaged 80 per cent., and the afternoon attendance 90 per cent. of the numbers enrolled. The Round O system has greatly contributed to this result. It was commenced in 1860, and has continued to the present time. The fruit of it is rendered visible at the annual festival in the month of January, when the tea and after-meeting are largely patronised. In the zenith of its prosperity it was a popular resort, and only a limited number of tickets were issued. Ever since the arrangement was made, this annual gathering has been presided over by F. H. Lloyd, Esq., or by his father. The prizes provided have been on a liberal and costly scale, and since 1860, 8,200 volumes have been distributed at a cost of £659.

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He was born at Coseley in November, 1814. In his profession of mining engineer he has achieved considerable distinction and success. This is abundantly evident from an account of his professional career, written by Mr. F. W. Hackwood in his series of "Wednesbury Worthies," published in *The Herald.* The article takes no notice however of his religious character and life. The foundation for these was laid in his conversion at the age of twenty-two. After some weeks' distress of mind, as he journeyed on horseback musing on his religious state, he enquired, "Lord, what can I do?" The answer came clear as a voice from heaven "Nothing,—Christ hath done all for thee." He saw clearly the plan of salvation, accepted Christ there and then, and went on his way rejoicing. He identified himself with the Wesleyan church at Walsall, and devoted himself to Christian work. This was in the year 1836. As before stated he became a resident at King's Hill in 1838, and by reason of his character, position, and influence, he took a leading part in our church affairs, and this he has continued to do for more than fifty years. During that time he has been Class Leader, Society Steward, Trustee, and for thirty-five years conductor of a week-day Bible class for the young. It is not too much to say that but for Mr. Smallman's enterprise, liberality and work, King's Hill would not now possess so fine a range of church buildings, nor would the general interests of the Society have prospered as they did. For some years Mr. Smallman served the circuit as its Senior Steward. In his labours of love Mr. Smallman was admirably supported by his late excellent wife, whose cheerful piety and christian zeal were manifest through a lengthened period. She was a true preacher's friend, and a devoted worker in the Sunday school. On May 22nd, 1891, she exchanged mortality for life. The esteem in which she was held, was beautifully expressed in

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numerous letters of condolence sent to the family by former ministers and friends.

On the occasion of their golden wedding, celebrated in March, 1888, Mr. and Mrs. Smallman received a very beautiful address, in richly illuminated form, from their fellow-workers in the Sunday School.

Chapter X.

THIRD JUBILEE OF METHODISM IN WEDNESBURY.

ON the arrival of the 150th year of the introduction of Methodism into the town, it was resolved to celebrate the event by suitable commemorative services, On Sunday, October 22nd, 1893, appropriate sermons were preached, in the morning by the Rev. W. J. Wilkinson, on "What hath God wrought," and in the evening by the Rev. Z. Robinson, on "Finally brethren, be perfect." On the afternoon of the following day, the Rev. F. L. Wiseman, B.A., preached a unique sermon on the great faith of the Roman centurion, and the Syro-Phœnician woman. At the close of the service tea was held in the schoolroom. In the evening of the same day a public Jubilee Meeting was held in the Church, at which a goodly number were present. In the absence of Edwin Hunt, Esq., C.A.. who had engaged to preside, but whose absence was accounted for by family bereavement, the chair was occupied by Mr. Wm. Partridge jun.

Mr. Partridge said that doubtless they all sympathised with those who were sorrowing under the painful bereavement which prevented Alderman Hunt from taking the chair at that meeting. He trusted they would also have a like sympathy to spare for one who had been suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to fill the vacancy. It might be asked what were his qualifications for the position of chairman of that meeting. If a Methodist ancestry counted for anything, if work for Methodism, and above all, love for Methodism, counted for anything, his presence there was not so unfitting as it might at first sight appear to be. If

he were to look down the pages of history he would be unable to trace any of the deeds of his ancestors ; but he had no cause to be ashamed. His grandfather was a Methodist. His name was William Partridge. He was a believer in Methodism—he loved Methodism. He was a class-leader. The two chief books he studied were the Bible and Wesley's hymn book. They were the guide of his life. His (the speaker's) father, bore the same name, was also a Methodist, and was still a worker in their midst. He had been connected with the cause for many years, and had its welfare very much at heart. As for himself, still bearing the same name, he was a Methodist of considerable standing—between thirty and forty years, more than half of which time had been spent in active service at Spring Head. He had an interest in the past of Methodism, in its present and also its future, for he had a son who still bore the same name, and he trusted he would grow up to be a more faithful and successful worker in Methodism than his father had been. Thus he had some interest in Methodism. He was proud when he thought of what Methodism had done and was doing, not only in this locality, but in the country and throughout the world, and he was more than ever proud when he regarded its future prospects.

The Rev. W. J. Wilkinson, while regretting the absence of some of the senior members of the Church, who were unable to be present, was glad to see one of the oldest Methodist veterans of the town in the person of Mr. Corbett, whom he visited some time ago and found him celebrating the 61st year of his membership with their church. It was a splendid record and he rejoiced that he had been spared to take part in the Jubilee meeting. He trusted that the spirit which animated them was one of praise and thanksgiving. "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad." After giving a resume of Methodist history as contained in the foregoing chapters, he contrasted the present position of Methodism in the town with that of the year 1804. *Then* there was one Methodist chapel, *now* there were seven ; *then* there were 147 members of the Church, *now* there

were 650, and more if Lea Brook were included. Noble as had been their history, they must not live on their traditions, but devoutly thanking God for the past, they must devote themselves afresh to the service of God.

Mr. W. Molineaux, of Bilston, then sang a solo "If with all your hearts."

The Rev. G. Latham. of Hill Top, West Bromwich, next addressed the meeting. He said that during the past few days he had read or scanned everything that Wesley had written in his Journals relating to Wednesbury. The first impression he got was that 150 years ago the people of Wednesbury were no better than than they ought to be, neither were the clergymen nor the magistrates of the neighbourhood. He thanked God that times had changed wonderfully since then. His second impression was that Methodism in Wednesbury very speedily transformed some human beings into heroes and heroines; and it must not be forgotten that Christ could make heroes to-day. All John Wesley's sermons were evangelical. He was an earnest man, and he knew that evangelical Christianity was the very Christianity that people of that day needed, and he preached it in fulness of heart with faith in God. He hoped they would not forget that evangelical preaching did the work of that day. However much they might hear about old truths being worn out and the age demanding something new, let them not forget that the preaching that made heroes, elevated the downtrodden, and transformed society, was evangelical preaching. Wesley's singing also was high-class singing. It was often said to-day that in order to reach the lower classes, they must have common ditties, which sometimes had scarcely an atom of real music or poetry in them. They could not, it was thought, bring high-class hymns down to the lower classes. Wesley did it, and it could be done to-day. They knew also that his methods included earnest prayer. and beyond these things he did not find very much else. Christian communion, organisation, and other things came afterwards; and he believed if Methodists adhered to these

lines—evangelical preaching. high-class singing, and earnest prayer—they had nothing whatever to fear.

The Rev. Samuel Lees, of Hill Top, next delivered an interesting address descriptive of the neighbourhood at the time of Wesley's first visit. It was now called the "Black Country," but it was not black then. To get a panoramic view of the Black Country the best point is Sedgley Beacon on a clear day, then the whole district is revealed at a glance. The whole basin is exhibited from Wolverhampton to Hampstead and away to Brownhills with towns and villages rising in groups here and there. On a smoky day it is different. It is a vision of smoke and chimneys. A traveller fifty years ago said that if you had a kitchen with a smoky chimney, would choose a day when the wind was right, scatter a number of bricks over the floor, place a few extinguishers and pepper castors here and there, and then shut the door till the kitchen was full of smoke, and look through the key hole, you would have a bird's eye view of Birmingham. That was something like the view on a smoky day. But you must take out many things to get the picture of 1743. First of all, the railways must be removed and the ground restored. All the canals, or nearly all, would have to go. Many of the roads like the Holyhead Road, must be converted into fields. Most of the houses would have to disappear. The chimney stacks would have to disappear, for they followed the invention of the steam engine and that was not yet. You would have houses clustering around the market place, and a few other places, gardens numerous, a little group of houses nestling under the church, a neat and pretty country town with small workshops, mines in the old field, and that would be Wednesbury. As you went south, you would pass the colony near Wednesbury Bridge, climb the steep bluff of Holloway Bank, and thence to Carter's Green, where you would meet a great common stretching far. This common was purple in its season with heather, golden with gorse having patches of scrub, and as you went the game would start, and the rabbits would flash their white coat tails as they darted to their

burrows. This was possibly the common where Whitfield preached. There were few places of worship. Churches at Darlaston and Wednesbury. A Friends' Meeting House in Lower High Street, and in West Bromwich two places, the church, not the present structure nor the one lately destroyed, but an older one, once dedicated to St. Clement, and served, before the Dissolution, by monks from Sandwell. Then there was the historic Old Meeting, obscured by its new name of Ebenezer. After reference to other matters, the speaker said reference had been made to the general value and service of the Wesleyan hymns, and their elevating and educational character. One hymn, 218, which had been used that night, was specially appropriate. Methodism proceeded on the lines of the commerce and industry of the day. The coal trade was developing, mines were being opened. The miners were sought out, hence Kingswood, Wednesbury and Newcastle became famous. Primitive apparatus served for raising the coal. There were no steam engines. At the pit mouths large cressets burned to give light. And on dark moonless nights there might be seen stars above and fires beneath. As the mines extended the fires spread, and each fire was a camp light for pioneers of the Methodist army. The glowing fires and growing successes inspired Charles Wesley who sang—

> See how great a flame aspires,
> Kindled by a spark of grace,
> Jesus' love the nations fires,
> Sets the kingdoms on a blaze.

But there was one hymn which so far, he believed, they had not used. It was the hymn of all others. It was full of local allusion. It was "Written after Deliverance in a Tumult." It was the hymn with which Methodists of Wednesbury, uniformly for a hundred years, celebrated their own or their forefathers' deliverance. It was "Worship and thanks and blessing." Though connected with Devizes, it had its beginnings here. It remembered Wesley's rescue, and it found other illustrations. The old Methodists were distinctive in dress. The women wore no flowers or coloured ribbands. The men were grave in attire.

One day a group of colliers saw a supposed Methodist coming. So they held him over a pit, and threatened to throw him down But the supposed Methodist proved to be a Quaker, and he invoked the protection of the law. And when the risks of mistakes were found out, they who were delivered sang—

Thine arm hath safely brought us,
A way no more expected
Than when Thy sheep passed through the deep,
By crystal walls protected.

The hymns were used to educate, to raise, to level up, and a plan of levelling up was that of old Methodism, not of levelling down other men or things. It was but a little man or thing that could only be made visible by making other men or things lie flat. And that was a method of securing visibility to which, the speaker said, he would not condescend to grovel.

Other speeches were delivered, and at the conclusion the customary votes of thanks terminated a most successful meeting.

Methodism in Darlaston.

Chapter I.

EARLY HISTORY.

THE town of Darlaston largely shared in the benefits accruing from the great Methodist Revival of the last century. What we have described as the state of morals and religion a century and a half ago, was as applicable to Darlaston as to Wednesbury. Similar results followed from the preaching of the early Methodists. Indeed for a time the history of Methodism in the two places is virtually one. We, therefore, find it only necessary to supplement the information contained in previous chapters by details referring more particularly to Darlaston.

Amongst those who attended the service held by Charles Wesley in 1742, in the coal pit field, Wednesbury, were some Darlaston people.

John Eaton says:—"I and many others rejoiced to hear it, particularly many of the poor people at Darlaston, some of whom soon after began to meet together in the evenings, to sing and pray, and read the Bible. Some at Wednesbury used to go and meet with them; but one evening the mob rose, pelted them with clods and stones, and broke all the windows of the house where they had been."

From this statement we perceive that the first sermon preached by the Wesleys was the foundation of the work both in Wednesbury and Darlaston, and that the persecution which

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soon so violently raged against the Methodists originated in Darlaston. The first appeal to the magistrates for protection was from the Methodists of Darlaston. In presenting their case to Squire Persehouse, of Walsall, they were joined by John Eaton and Francis Ward, of Wednesbury. This was on May 30th, 1743.

James Jones, one of the appellants, thus describes the scene:—"As we were going to and from the Justice's house, the Walsall mob pelted us with dirt and stones. They raged more and more, till Francis Ward desired the Justice, who was present, to quiet them; but instead of that he swung his hat round his head and cried 'Huzza.' On which encouragement they grew so outrageous that we were forced to take shelter in a public-house, and to stay there till it was dark."

Amongst those who suffered in the persecution, Joshua Constable and his wife were the victims of brutal outrage. In addition to personal violence their windows were broken, their property destroyed, and both they and their children were driven out of their home in the bitterness of a wild wintry night; none daring to relieve them or give them shelter. Many similar instances occurred.

In the terrible ordeal through which John Wesley passed in October 1743, and which was described in the first chapter of Methodism in Wednesbury, the Darlaston mob took its part. But on reaching Walsall they were prepared to relent; when, to quote Wesley's words, "the mob of Walsall came, pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them. The Darlaston mob made what defence they could; but they were weary, as well as outnumbered; so that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest ran away, and left me in their hands." One nameless woman, whose heart softened towards Wesley, was herself in danger of her own life. "The poor woman of Darlaston, who had headed the mob, and sworn that none should touch me, when she saw her followers give way ran into the thickest of the throng and knocked down three or four men

one after another. But many assaulting her she was soon overpowered and had probably been killed in a few minutes had not 'honest Munchin' interfered, when she got up and crawled home as best she could."

It seems that early in 1744 the Vicar of Wednesbury incited the Darlastonians to a fresh campaign against the Methodists. He employed the town crier, Nicholas Winsper, to give public notice that all persons connected with the Society must come to Mr. Foreshew's, and sign a paper pledging themselves "never to read, or sing, or pray together, or hear those Parsons any more." The penalty of refusing was the demolition of their houses. Some signed through fear, but the greater part stood firm.

Wesley's visits to Darlaston.

The Founder of the Methodist Church is said to have visited Darlaston nine times. Of these mention is made of seven in his journals. The first of these was on April 2nd, 1751; a short but significant entry:—"I preached at Darlaston, late a den of lions; but most of the fiercest of them God has called away by a train of amazing strokes, and those that remain are now as lambs." Of several of his visits to the town no details are preserved. In the three latest—1782-5-7—he was permitted to preach in the Parish Church. The last entry is of a cheering kind. March 28th, 1787. "At Darlaston I preached on those words of *Ruth*, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." We have had no such time since we left Bristol. The flame of love seemed to melt many hearts. What has God done for Darlaston! How are the last becoming first!"

From an old account book which has been preserved, it appears that sundry small expenses incurred by Mr. Wesley were paid by the Society. Amongst the entries in 1767, corn for Mr. Wesley's horse, 2/6, and a halter 6d., may be found. On another page, four dinners for Mr. Mather, 6/-. The book from which these entries are taken has been mutilated by some autograph hunter. The accounts appear to have been audited

and signed, and in each case the signature has been cut out. It is supposed to have been the autograph of Wesley himself.

A singular tradition has been handed down in reference to one of Wesley s earlier visits, which was related to Rev. H. Banks many years ago by an old inhabitant, who believed in its accuracy. When preaching in a house the cry was made that the mob was coming. Mr. Wesley went up stairs, others hid themselves here and there, whilst some stayed and barricaded doors and windows in readiness for the siege. One, Peter like, caught hold of a rusty sword, and hearing that some were attempting to enter by the window, he stood in readiness to resist them. The ring-leader, whose name was Horton, was in the act of passing through the window, and his assailant gave him a tremendous thrust with the sword in the chest. He was taken home to bed, and by and by sent for the man who had wounded him, and sought his help and prayer. He became a changed character; he begged the old sword that had brought him to his senses, and to his life's end it hung at the bed's head as a memorial of the event.

Chapter II.

THE PLANT OF METHODISM.

FOR some time, as we have seen, the early Methodists of Darlaston held services in each other's houses, but at length decided to have a settled place of meeting. They rented the front room of a widow's house in Church Street. The growth of the congregation at last led to the erection of a chapel. Mr. Hackwood, in his History of Darlaston, says that the *first chapel* was built in 1790. In this he is mistaken., as there is abundant evidence to prove that it was erected in 1760, or at any rate begun about that time, which our readers will remember was the date of the first chapel in Wednesbury. Alexander Mather was one of the preachers of the Staffordshire circuit in 1760, and he says "At Darlaston we purchased ground and built a preaching house." On his visit to the town on March 24th, 1764, Wesley preached in it. He says of the north-east wind then keenly blowing "It drove us into *the house* at Darlaston, that is, as many as it could contain." The Chapel was octagon in shape, and was situated in Meeting, now called Bilston Street. Further evidence for the earlier date of the first chapel is found in the old account book referred to in the last chapter, where between the years 1760—64 the income and expenditure for "ye building at Darlingston" are given. From these we gather that the chapel cost about £200, including amounts paid to Mr. Turton for the site £13 2s. 0d., and to Mr. Shaw for "ye writing." The amount raised was about £120, the remaining £80 being borrowed on interest. Some interesting items of income may be mentioned. In the first subscription list, March, 1760, occur the names of those two grand old Methodists, Fran-

cis Ward, £1, Joshua Constable £1 1s. Bilston sent a contribution of 30/-, Walsall 22/-, Wednesbury £5 17s. 0d., and later £2 5s. The Conference gave a grant at a later period of £19.

In 1787 the room showed signs of decay, and repairs and improvements were effected. In particular, an iron pillar for the support of the roof was erected. On April 10th of that year the Steward "paid for the pillar £7 15s. 6d." A little later a chandelier was introduced and the entry occurs "Paid towards the chandelier £1 17s. 6d., the rest being made up by subscription."

The second Chapel.

By the year 1807 the provision for public worship was inadequate to meet the needs of the growing society and congregation. A deputation waited on the Marquis of Stafford, at Trentham, requesting a site for a new chapel. After some delay arrangements were concluded, and in the year 1810 the second chapel was built in Pinfold Street. This was the Jubilee year of the first chapel, and also the Jubilee of George the Third's reign. The Rev. H. Banks says of this chapel "It was about square. The pulpit was built against the wall and the singing seat was in front of it. The communion table and rails were in front of that. I believe that when the chapel was built very little money was raised, for about the year 1833 or 4 a committee was formed for the purpose of raising within three years £800. The debt was then £2800." The building was enlarged in 1833—4, Mr. Horton's contract for £420 being accepted. Mr. Banks says "the land for the enlargement, and that on which the chapel-keeper's house, is built was given by the late Mr. Richard Bills. During the enlargement the services were held in the schools opposite." From the last sentence it appears that the Wesleyans were possessed of a two-storied building for their *Sunday School*. These premises belonged to Mr. Hughes, of King Street, and were probably rented. The present plain but commodious school room was built in 1846 and has been enlarged and adapted to Day School needs from time to time.

The Burial Ground behind the chapel was opened in 1833 or 1834 by the Rev. H. Fish, M.A., of Birmingham, who preached a powerful sermon on the ground to a large congregation on Psalm L. 3—6. It was a very hot day. A friend shielded the preacher from the rays of the sun by means of a carriage umbrella. A second enlargement of the chapel in Pinfold Street, amounting almost to a re-building of the premises, took place in 1876—7. The Memorial Stones, hearing date, November 27th, 1876, were laid by Enoch Horton, Esq., and by Job Taylor, Esq., J.P. The amount expended was £2584 18s. 8d.. and it says much for the ability and liberality of the Wesleyans of that day that the whole amount was raised. Amongst the items of income was a noble subscription list of £778 10s. 9d. and a Bazaar, the net proceeds of which were £507 8s. 6d.

The Organ was placed in the chapel in 1862, the sanctioned expenditure on which was £300.

The Minister's Residence was built in 1884. A most successful Bazaar was held about the time, from the proceeds of which £400 was voted towards an expenditure of £883.

A new body of Trustees was appointed by the Charity Commissioners in 1893 to take charge of the property of the Connexion under the provisions of the Model Deed. The heritage of debt handed down to them from their fathers is £800, which we hope will be speedily reduced.

From the foregoing account it is evident that the Wesleyans of Darlaston have been an enterprizing Church, and have not hesitated to expend large sums of money to meet the exigences of the work of God as they arose from time to time.

Chapter III.

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT.

IT is from the writings of the Rev. Alexander Mather that we get some glimpses of the state of the work of God in Darlaston in 1760. In a letter to Mr. Wesley, written in December of that year, he makes the remarkable statement that while the membership had reached 48, not more than 7 professed to enjoy the pardoning love of God. An extract from this letter will give a glimpse of the state of affairs. "Although at Wednesbury several have been added, and many converted this quarter, yet the most remarkable part of the work of God has been in that old, steadfast, persecuted Society, Darlaston, who in the midst of all the parties that have been in Staffordshire, have stood unmoved to their first principles,. And this their steadfastness was the more surprising, as there were but seven in the whole society who professed saving faith. But, glory be to God, their number and their grace are greatly increased. Now, there are about thirty out of forty-eight who have saving faith, and as their grace so their number has increased thirty-three this quarter." This improvement was partly the outcome of the remarkable conversion of an apprentice of Mr. Thomas Day, whose name is not given. On Sunday evening, December 7th, he was powerfully convinced of sin. He was in great distress. All night he literally roared in the disquietude of his spirit. On the following morning, in the presence of many witnesses God spoke peace to his soul. "The beholders were astonished. It pleased God to open his mouth to those who were present, so that none were able to resist the power wherewith he spake.

They fell before his word, cried for mercy, and above twelve were delivered that day." For some days the lad went from house to house exhorting the people, and remarkable results followed. In particular, two children about nine years of age, were filled with the love of God, and out of their mouths God perfected praise. At the close of the narrative Mr. Mather says "The whole town seemed alarmed, and came in troops to the preaching at Wednesbury."

In 1763 persecution again afflicted the Societies in South Staffordshire. Mr. Mather was at Stroud when the disturbances began. Riding over from thence he found the whole district in a state of terror. Speaking of the roughs from Wolverhampton, he says "They came first to Darlaston, a place long famous for rioting, hoping to meet with encouragement. But a hog butcher who lived near the House, leaped out of bed, seized his cleaver, and running out, swore death to the first that meddled with it. So unexpected a reception discouraged them and made them run away faster than they came." Verily, Darlaston abounded in brave defenders of the Methodists!

The growth of the Society from Mr. Mather's day was rapid From an old account book we find that the Wesleyans paid their contributions weekly in the classes. The Leaders' names in 1760 were G. Adams, J. Adams, Thomas Day and M. Wilkes.

The following list shows the names of the Leaders, the numbers in Society, and the amounts contributed in 1820, for one quarter:

Numbers.	Leaders.	Class contributions.
8	T. Bayley	1 0 6
6	John Wilkes	0 13 1
8	Joseph Best	1 9 6
8	Frances Taylor	0 14 0
19	Joseph Wilkes	1 15 7
34	Thomas Foster	3 12 7
6	Richard Page	0 18 8
7	Thomas Horton	0 9 6½
12	William Bayley	1 10 0

10	James Foster	... ...	1 0 10
9	Mrs. Clarke	... ...	0 18 9
21	T. Rubery	... ...	1 17 11
148			£16 0 11½

The Society continued to increase until in 1834; after the visitation of cholera, its membership reached the culminating point of 418. It must be remembered that the Darlaston Society of that period embraced a wide area, and that the classes meeting at King's Hill, Moxley, The Green, and Falling's Heath were included in these returns. The Wesleyans of that day were full of zeal, and went to the outlying districts in Home Mission work. The Societies named may rightly regard Darlaston as their Mother Church.

Darlaston Methodism may claim to be not only the mother of Societies, but of Circuits. To quote from Pratt's "Black Country Methodism," "Methodism entered *Willenhall* from Darlaston by way of Monmore Lane, where three roads to and from Willenhall meet. In the open space where the roads converged, was a large boulder stone that formed a platform or pulpit for the preachers from Darlaston, one of whom christened it 'the Gospel stone.' Once or oftener, each Sunday, a Methodist open-air service was held there, and thither Willenhall people would flock to hear what the Darlaston babblers had to say. None that ever came after them led the old Wesleyans of Willenhall to forget how much they were indebted to the faith and earnestness of Foster, Wilkes, Rubery, Silcock, Bowen, Banks, and others who first brought Methodism from Darlaston to Willenhall."

In illustration of the vigorous type of Methodism in Darlaston the same writer relates that the early Primitive Methodists sent forth volunteers into many parts of the Black Country, and that by their earnest and persistent labours, they founded Societies and Churches which in many cases have developed into Circuits

But to return to the records of the old Body; in 1844 the membership of the Church had been reduced to 380, and at the close of the next decade it had even declined to 163. In explanation of this sad decrease, two things must be borne in mind. First, that by this time the outlying mission stations had become independent Societies, their returns being no longer merged in those from Darlaston; and secondly, a great disaster had befallen the Wesleyan Church in the Reform Agitation of 1849, and subsequent years. Perhaps nowhere in the district were its effects more severely felt than in Darlaston. Almost the entire staff in the Sunday School were affected by the movement. They took possession of the school premises in the name of Reform. An acute stage in the unhappy strife was reached in 1851—2, when the Trustees of the property had to threaten them with legal ejectment. The disaffected party at last separated from the Mother Church, but conceiving they had a right to certain matters of furniture, which belonged to the Trustees, they carried away with them benches, pulpit, crockery, clock, &c. These were sad times, and we would gladly have cast a veil over them, but for the need of historic faithfulness, and the explanation of the decrease referred to.

By this time a flourishing mission station was in existence at *Falling's Heath.* A class had been formed by Mr. Banks, father of the Rev. H. Banks. The last-named, with Messrs. E. Carter and E. Suter, carried on the Sunday School, in which nearly a hundred children were taught. A school-chapel was built in which services were regularly held. But owing to the Agitation the work was wrecked, the school was closed, and the building disposed of.

These circumstances, followed by depression in trade, and the increased activity and rivalry of other churches, have reduced the strength of the original Methodist church, around which cluster many traditions of the deepest interest. Methodism however, is the only branch of Nonconformity that flourishes in Darlaston. The Wesleyans from 1743, the Primitive Methodists from 1812,

and the Free Methodists from 1851, have preached the doctrines of evangelical Christianity with power and success. They possess six sanctuaries in the township, two of them being large and well appointed ; the united church membership bordering on four hundred.

Included in these is the Wesleyan cause at

Darlaston Green

About 1832 or 3 a room was procured which was known as "Shake's Castle," in which preaching services were held on Sunday afternoons. Mr. Banks, sen., met a class there at the close of the service.—In 1842 the Duke of Sutherland was applied to for land on which to erect a chapel. A plot of land was conditionally offered, but on further enquiry it was found that the land in question was not his. A suitable plot was at length found, and on which in 1844 the first chapel was built. This served its purpose well until it was rendered utterly useless by mining operations. The Trustees were put thereby to great inconvenience and expense. But a new site was secured and a larger chapel erected in 1870. The foundation stones were laid by A. Brogden, Esq., and E. Horton, Esq., the latter named giving the munificent sum of £200 towards the building fund. The original cost of the premises was £1132. Towards this amount £88 was raised by a Bazaar, and £63 17s. 0d. was contributed at the opening services. A schoolroom was built at a later period. The debt on the entire premises stands at the present time at £180. The chapel has recently undergone thorough renovation at a cost of £60. Enoch Horton, Esq., who has always been a friend to the work here, generously assisted in meeting the expense.

The first separate mention of the Society at The Green, as apart from Darlaston, was in the year 1851, when 39 members were returned. With fluctuations, to which all churches are subject, the membership has recently been returned at about the same number. A good Sunday School, Band of Hope, and Adult Bible class held on Saturday evenings, are the principal forms of

Christian activity, by which, in addition to the public services, the neighbourhood is benefitted. The late Mr. Edward Lancaster was deeply interested in the work here, and for years acted as its Society and Chapel Steward.

THE TURNER FAMILY.

Amongst those who have taken an active part in the work at The Green, special mention should be made of the late Mrs. Turner. The following particulars are taken from the memorial sketch prepared by the Rev. J. H. Wilkinson.

Mrs. Turner's father was a great admirer of John Wesley, and used to walk miles to hear him preach. On one occasion, when Mr. Wesley was journeying from Walsall to Wednesbury, he was one of those who assisted in protecting him from the violence of the mob, who threatened to throw him into the brook. On another occasion when Mr. Wesley was preaching near West Bromwich, he carried out a chair for him to stand upon. That chair is still preserved by Mr. Edward Turner as an heirloom.

The late Mrs. Turner was born in 1808, and about the year 1836 she became a member of the Church at Darlington Street, Wolverhampton. Some years after she removed to Lanesfield, in the Bilston circuit, and became an active member of the church there. In 1849 she rendered valuable help in the erection of a new chapel. In 1857, she with her husband and family, removed to Darlaston Green, and at once joined the society. She took a special interest in the building of the present chapel, and was delighted when it was opened for Divine service. She was an out and out Methodist, and at one period fulfilled the office of society steward. The few years of her retirement from active service were spent in great peace. Nothing seemed to trouble her but the illness of her daughter, whom she grieved to think she might leave behind. She in the Providence of God survived her mother but three days: both died in peace, and in one grave and at the same time, they were

both interred. Of her sons, it may suffice to say they are attached to the Methodist church, Mr. Edward Turner, residing at Bloxwich, served the Walsall Centenary Circuit for some years as its circuit steward; and Mr. Daniel Turner, during his residence at The Green as its society steward. The cause there has seriously suffered from the death and removal of the members of this family.

Chapter IV.

SOME NOTABLE CHARACTERS.

HAD we suitable material at hand, many an interesting record could be presented of the worthies of the Methodist Church of a century ago. As we have seen they were of an heroic and enterprising type. They were called to suffer, as well as to work, for Christ; and the discipline through which they passed produced characters of sterling worth, marked by much individuality, and in some cases by eccentricity.

THE CONSTABLES.

Amongst the heroes of the early period, who endured the spoiling of their goods, was Benjamin Constable, a shopkeeper. In 1743, February 6th, his house was violently broken into, his furniture destroyed, his grocery goods and chandler's ware pillaged, the entire damage being estimated at £103. James Constable's house on the same day was similarly treated, his windows broken, and his goods carried away; and from thence the mob proceeded to Daniel Constable's, whom they plundered in like manner.

The wife of Joshua Constable was abused by the mob as she was on her way to Wednesbury in a manner too shocking to relate. Mr. Pratt says, "She suffered to the day of her death from the effects of the ill-treatment of the mob. But her sufferings, and the memory of their cause, only stimulated her exertions to rescue those around her from the brutality that had so nearly deprived her of her life. She left behind her a daugh-

ter, Mrs. Thomas Bailey, who never wearied in well-doing. Mrs. Bailey was a member of the Darlaston society for 73 years, and was honoured by the personal friendship of Mr. Wesley, who never came to Darlaston without calling to see her. He equally honoured her husband, whom he himself made a steward of Darlaston Chapel. Among the older and more notable members, were Edward and Daniel Bagnall, relatives of Mrs. Thomas Bailey."

"GENTLEMAN JOHN WILKES."

Perhaps the most eccentric character that Darlaston produced was John Wilkes, surnamed gentleman, on account of the wealth that he secured as the result of hard toiling in his business career. While a shrewd man, who boasted that he never lost ten shillings in business, because he never trusted anybody, yet he was ready "to honour the Lord with his substance," as was manifested on special occasions. He bought land and five cottages at the rear of the premises in Pinfold Street and presented them to the trustees. The land was used as a Burial ground. In the year 1847 Mr. Wilkes presented the church with a communion service in solid silver. Rev. H. Banks was visiting his father at the time and accompanied him to the trustee meeting when it was given. Rev. Samuel Simpson was in the chair. When placed on the table Mr. R. Bills said "I should like to have had a hand in it." On consideration he decided to provide a substantial mahogany box, well fitted, for its care and preservation.

Amongst the reminiscences of this brother preserved by Messrs. Pratt and Banks, we make the following selections—"After paying his men on Saturday it was his custom to take the remaining cash to his bedroom, and before getting into bed, he took the money in his hand and kneeling down said 'Lord, if there is any of this money that has not been gotten honestly, take it from me.' He then put it into the cash box for the bank on Monday."

Mr. Wilkes thus retailed an incident connected with his conversion. "When I began to seek the Lord, I thought I was not humble enough, and I said what shall I do to get humbler and a voice said to me, 'Go and pray in the cellar.' That was not low and mean enough, and again a voice said, 'Go and pray in the pigstye.' I went and amongst the pigs I found the Lord."

Being one of the chapel trustees, he was much concerned at the heavy debt resting on the premises. He thought to reduce it by the chance of obtaining a heavy prize at a great lottery in Birmingham, in which he somewhat heavily invested. To his chagrin he heard the announcement "John Wilkes—a blank." He wisely concluded that God did not approve of money gained for his work by such methods.

Amongst the vagaries entertained by this singular brother was that he should be translated to heaven like Enoch. He sought preparation for the event, and when he supposed the set time had come, he went at night to a large tree that stood on the left side of the Wednesbury road, and that stood in the corner of the field near by, and ascending the tree, he exclaimed "Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace," but said he "after waiting some time the translation didn't come, so I got down again, and came home quite disappointed." In relatting the circumstance to Rev. Henry Banks, he explained that his getting into the tree was the cause of failure. He was seeking by works and not by faith. In climbing the tree he 'was trying to help God and that spoiled it all.' Sometimes however his impressions were of a more reliable character.

Rev. H. Banks vouches for the truth of the following relation, which we give in his own words. "Early in the century there was a glass house at Falling's Heath where some fifteen or twenty men were employed in glass blowing. One day Mr. Wilkes went down to see the process. He told me that after he had been there a short time, he had such a deep impression that the building would fall, that he said to the men, 'Get out at

once for I am quite sure that in less than ten minutes the building will tumble down.' His manner was so earnest that they all went out, but after waiting for some minutes, without any sign of its giving way, some were about to re-enter. He implored them to wait, and fortunately they heeded the warning. He said 'while we stood in the yard, staring like a lot of fools, the building fell."

Good John Wilkes had the notion that he could preach, but as this was not shared by his fellow Christians, he had no call from the Church. But when about sixty years of age, he built a small chapel in his own garden, and "naming it Bethel, called with large bell hung on little steeple, Darlaston to hear him every Sunday afternoon. Darlaston went for a time out of curiosity, and gave signs of merriment, when he would be pathetic. 'There's that sermon of mine on Joseph,—it's enough to move the heart of a stone, but the hearts of the people here are harder than stone for they only laugh when I preach it.' So Gentleman Wilkes eventually closed the Chapel." *Pratt.* As Mr. Banks says, who knew him well, "Notwithstanding his eccentricities, he was a good man, both honest and true."

JOHN SIDAWAY.

In his reminiscences of Darlaston, Rev. H. Banks gives the following. Attending a Lovefeast when a youth, he heard the following testimony from John Sidaway, of Wood's Bank. "I had been out of work for eighteen weeks. All my money was gone and I was deeply in debt at the shops. One Sunday morning things seemed to be at the worst. I went upstairs and fell on my knees. How long I had been praying I don't know, but my 'missus' disturbed me by calling out at the foot of the stairs, 'Jack come down directly.' To my great surprise I found a joint of roast beef and potatoes, a loaf of bread, a pair of new boots and two shillings. I said 'who has brought this?' 'A young woman,' she said. 'Who is she?' 'Don't know.' 'Run to the door and see.' She went, but could see nobody, and to

this day we don't know who sent the things." At another time when in great trouble, he went to hear the Rev. Richard Watson preach in Wednesbury. His subject was Ezekiel's vision of the wheels. The next day the following colloquy occurred between him and Edward Millington at the ironworks. 'Well Ned, was't at Wedgbury last night to hear the great Watson?' Aye lad. 'Dos't think there is a wheel o' Providence?' 'Aye, bless thee lad.' 'Think it goes round?' 'That I do Jack. Praise the Lord, I'm at the bottom spoke now, and it don't matter much which way it turns, I'm sure to go up!"

THE BANKS' FAMILY.

Amongst the worthies who actively served their generation in Darlaston, Mr. Banks may be referred to. He entered on his career as a Class Leader in the December quarter of 1829. To this branch of Christian work he specially devoted himself. At one time he had five classes under his care. The Monday night class was a large one and had to be divided. His son one evening counted 68 as actually present. He formed the first Class at Darlaston Green, and also at Falling's Heath, and took his full share in Home Mission work. In these works of faith and labours of love he was well supported by his son Henry, who commended himself to the Church as suitable for the ministry. After a term at college he entered on Circuit work in 1840, and after travelling in a number of circuits with acceptance and fidelity, he in the year 1880 was appointed to Darlaston, being a notable exception to the rule that a prophet has no honour in his own country. After a course of 55 years' service, he is quietly tarrying the Lord's will in the town of Liskeard. His reminiscences of 1832, the year of the cholera, and of the revival that followed, are worthy of record. Places of worship were crowded. As many as 600 persons attended the prayer meetings in the schools opposite the chapel. Great religious excitement prevailed, and many sought and found mercy. The revival affected the entire town, and every place of worship. In the Parish Church, while the Rev. G. Fisk was preaching, a woman fell

upon her knees and cried for mercy. The Rector said "if some of you praying men will take the good woman into the vestry and give her suitable advice, we will sing a few verses, and proceed with our service. At the close he went to the vestry, knelt down by her side, and while pointing her to Jesus, she exulted in a sense of sins forgiven. Finding she attended the Primitive Methodists, with a liberality of spirit not often seen in these days, he exhorted her to join a Class, and to retain the blessing she had received. At Pinfold Street, a Class of young men was formed by Mr. Jones, from which three promising youths passed into the ministry. Reuben Partridge, Jabez Yardley, and Thomas Withington, were accepted as candidates, at the first Birmingham Conference in 1836.

Miss Banks, sister of the Rev. H. Banks, has also for many years, been a valued Leader in the Darlaston Church. Her recent removal from the town was an occasion of sincere regret.

Chapter V.— A Modern Worthy.

EDWARD LANCASTER.

AS a connecting link between the older and the more recent Methodism, we present our readers with some account of this excellent man, who had been a member of the Darlaston Society for sixty-five years, and had long been the senior Local Preacher and Leader of the Circuit. For the following particulars we are indebted to the Rev. J. H. Wilkinson whose memorial sketch we are compelled to abridge.

"Mr. Lancaster was born at Dudley on September 11th, 1811. When he was about six years of age, the family removed to Birmingham, and afterwards, about the year 1820, to Darlaston. For some time, whilst his parents were residing in Darlaston, he lived with his grandfather, who was Clerk of the Parish Church, and schoolmaster at Aldridge, with whom he remained until he was old enough to learn his father's trade as a bootmaker. Under his grandfather's influence he became a thoughtful and devout youth, regularly attending the services of the Parish Church, thus in his early days manifesting that love for God's House and for His worship, which he retained and manifested to the end of his days.

But the time came for his return to the home of his parents at Darlaston. His grandfather still retained an affectionate interest in his welfare, and desirous of attaching him more closely to the Church of England, urged upon him the importance of preparing himself for Confirmation. But, shortly after his return to Darlaston, he was led to attend the Wesleyan services at Pinfold Street, and under a sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Powis, he

told his grandfather that he was 'confirmed in the faith' in a sense which in his judgment rendered unnecessary the ordinance of Confirmation, as observed in the Established Church. About the same time he was deeply impressed by a sermon on Purity, which a Mr. Slater preached to the young, and which, he often declared, he remembered daily for years.

The spiritual benefit which Mr. Lancaster received through the instrumentality of Methodism at this early period of his life, strengthened his attachment to it, so that we find him in the year 1836, going on a visit to London, mainly for the purpose of attending the May Meetings, and of visiting City Road chapel, whither so many pilgrims wend their way. His son describes this visit in the following terms:—"My father rode on the outside of the coach, starting from Birmingham in the evening. The meeting was held on the morning of his arrival. But he was so excessively drowsy from exposure to the night air, that he was afraid he would not be able to keep awake. However he determined to go to the meeting. The building (old Exeter Hall) was crowded, but he found a seat at the top of the gallery. He was so delighted and carried away with the fervour and eloquence of the speeches, more especially by one delivered by the Rev. Theophilus Lessey, that he forgot all about his fatigue until the meeting was over."

Mr. Lancaster's attachment to the church of his choice remained unbroken. He believed in Methodism, in its polity, its institutions and doctrines. Thus with reference to one of its most distinctive doctrines, the Witness of the Spirit, the following incident shows the strength of his convictions and the reality of his belief. About forty years ago, a clergyman, the Rev. Patrick Wilson, at that time Vicar of Moxley, frequently called at his shop as a customer, and entered into discussions on theological subjects. On one occasion the doctrine referred to formed the subject of animated conversation. 'I believe' said the clergyman 'in the Holy Ghost' but, appealing to Mr. Lancaster, 'do you believe in instant and present manifestations of Divine

favour ?' The answer was most emphatic. 'Why, yes, certainly. I tell you, Sir, it was my experience. I could show you the place where I stood, and could tell you the time by the clock, when the Holy Spirit witnessed to my soul that all my sins were forgiven and that I was accepted of God.'

In the year 1833, when the cholera was raging in the district, Mr. Lancaster went from house to house, praying and ministering to the sick and dying. One who knew him at the time says 'He seemed to bear a charmed life. He had no fear, for he believed the Master would preserve him from the pestilence, in discharging the duty which he believed he was called upon to render.'

For over sixty years his name appeared as a *Local Preacher* on the plan of the Wednesbury circuit. His first sermon was preached at Falling's Heath on the text, Worship God. He was particularly interested in the writings of the Prophets, especially those of Isaiah. His sermons though somewhat lengthy, were marked by intelligence and enriched by experience.

For many years he was a Class Leader, for thirty years at Moxley, and for a considerable period at Pinfold Street. It was pleasant to listen to his experience, full of thankfulness for the past, and bright with hope concerning the future.

He was associated with the cause of Methodism at The Green from the very beginning. He was one of its oldest trustees, for many years treasurer of its Trust, and Steward of the Church, and in other capacities he rendered cheerful and devoted service.

For Wesley's Hymns he had great admiration, regarding them as second to none. His acquaintance with the hymns sung in public worship kindled the poetic faculty which was in him. Many of his leisure hours were spent in metrical compositions, which though somewhat lacking in melody of expression, reveal here and there evidence of the poet's faculty.

Death came to him somewhat suddenly, but it did not find him unprepared. His best preparation was the life of Christian

service which he lived. His noblest testimony was the faith and integrity which he maintained throughout the course of a long earthly pilgrimage. His name was found in the book of life, and we now write his name among the happy dead of sacred memory."

Mr. Lancaster died on January 11th, 1895, in his 84th year, and was interred in the Cemetery, Darlaston, on the following Tuesday, the three Circuit Ministers taking part in the proceedings, and the bearers being selected from the local preachers' list.

Methodism in Bradley.

Chapter I.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH.



Wesleyan Chapel, Bradley, as originally built.

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Chapter I.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH.



Wesleyan Chapel, Bradley, as originally built.

The following particulars are taken from Lawley's *History of Bilston*, and the *Handbook of Bradley Methodism* published by the Rev. J. Chapple in 1888 :—

THE history of Methodism in Bradley goes back to the days of the Wesleys, and is full of interest. Although there is no record that John Wesley ever visited Bradley, yet the whole neighbourhood—Bilston, Wednesbury, Walsall and Tipton—is fragrant with memories of his visits. During these visits many people from Bradley heard him preach, some of whom sought and found Christ. Others heard Whitfield preach on Bromwich Heath, and were thus brought to a knowledge of Christ as their Saviour, while some more were led to seek their salvation by a faithful fireside talk with Honest Munchin, or Francis Ward, whose memory in the Black Country is as "ointment poured forth."

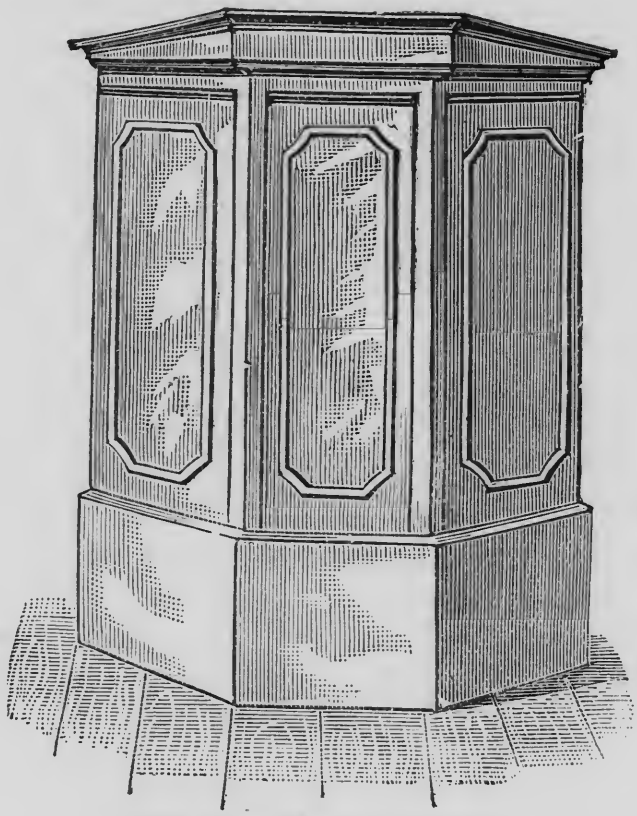
The new converts formed themselves into a Society and frequently met together for mutual counsel and prayer.

The first preaching room of which we have any record was an improvised chamber erected over a couple of washhouses, in construction and plan evidently the work of amateurs. It was approached from the main street, or thoroughfare, by a "tortuours passage along narrow courts, under frowning entries, and past an array of back doors, suggestive of squalid homes where anything but 'mirth and hospitality might reign.' But frail and unsightly though the structure was, it was "the house of God, and the gate of heaven" to the little band of disciples who were accustomed to worship there.

The limits of our space forbid us to speak of the steadfastness and quiet heroism of those early Methodists, how they suffered contumely and loss, and all forms of persecution, rather than deny their faith,and converted the name *Methodist* into a title of honour for their descendents.

The little Meeting House was soon found inadequate to the needs of the growing Society. How the little band succeeded

in getting a new chapel has been told oft and again. It reads like a romance, yet it is a piece of well-authenticated history, that they prayed Squire Wilkinson—a good hater of the Methodists—into building them a chapel. This chapel was the famous "Cast Metal Meeting House," so called because the doors, window frames, and whatever else iron would do for—even the pulpit—were made of that useful metal. Squire Wilkinson was well paid for the gift in the salvation of his soul. He attended one of the opening services to see how the cast-iron pulpit looked, and the word, preached by one of his own workmen, took hold of his heart.



THE CAST METAL PULPIT.

The Cast Metal Meeting House did good service for many years, until it, too, became inadequate to the needs of Bradley Methodism, and was replaced by the present chapel. The iron doors, &c., of the old chapel were converted to more secular

purposes, but the cast-iron pulpit is retained in the schoolroom of the existing chapel as a precious legacy of memorable times. The present chapel, which provides accommodation for about 700 worshippers, was opened in the month of April, 1835, by Dr. Newton.

In 1889 a capacious porch was added to the building, and the premises entirely renovated at a cost of £376. A minister's house was built in Wesley Street, and is the property of the trustees. Until recently there was no debt on the trust estate, but it being deemed desirable to obtain the site adjoining the chapel for the erection of school premises, including class rooms and caretaker's house, some expense has been incurred in that direction. The site having been procured, the trustees will proceed with the building as soon as the amount in hand will justify their action. In aid of the building fund, a grand Bazaar was held in the Town Hall, Bilston, on October 30th, 1894, and following days, by which the handsome amount was netted of £408 14s. 6d. The Sunday School is at present, and has for many years, been carried on in the schoolroom underneath the chapel, and though some relief to the inconvenience of the situation has been found in the infant schoolroom and class rooms behind the chapel, the pressing need of the new building is keenly felt, especially in the hot days of summer, and we trust that the day is not far distant when the friends at Bradley will be able to rise and build. We trust also that the proposed erection will be a handsome suite of buildings, well arranged and appointed for school and general purposes, and that it will be a credit to Bradley Methodism.

Chapter II.

SOME GENERAL FEATURES.

THE Bradley District may be claimed as a stronghold of Methodism. In the centre of a populous neighbourhood, with one Anglican Church, there are five Methodist Chapels, of which the one connected with the old Wesleyan body is by far the most commodious in its arrangements and attended by the largest congregation. Heartiness and earnestness have been general characteristics of the society. It has, like many other places in the district, had its periods of progress and decline. It appears to have gained its culminating period of growth in the year 1833, when 331 members were returned in connection with the Wesleyan Church.

The following statement in decades will show the fluctuations as recorded in the circuit books during the present century :—

1804	...	92	1854	...	176
1814	...	184	1864	...	188
1824	...	163	1874	...	164
1834	...	299	1884	...	110
1844	...	201	1894	...	123

Judging from the Handbook of Bradley Wesleyan Methodism published by Rev. J. Chapple in 1888, this church embraced in its range of action almost every kind of church work. In addition to the regular ministration of the Word, and the instruction imparted in the Sunday School, and the Foreign Missionary Auxiliary, there were conducted Mothers' Meetings, Dorcas Meetings, a Band of Hope, Cottage Services, Tract Society, Adult Bible Class, and other agencies for the young

and the working classes. Possibly some of these special agencies have lapsed, but certainly at that period there was every appearance of a well organized and enterprising Church, a position we have no doubt the friends at Bradley will strive to maintain. When the new school premises are erected, and the work and enterprise which are involved become things of the past, we trust a bright era of advance will mark the history of this old society.

One of the special features of the work at Bradley, is the attention paid to the service of song. The Church here is much indebted to Mr. W. Molineaux, jun., for the interest taken by him for some years in this department. Under his direction a choir of some sixty voices has been brought to a high state of efficiency. Not only have the Sabbath services been made more hearty and attractive, but good help has been rendered by the choir on special occasions, when sacred concerts and cantatas have been given at Bilston and other places where requested. In particular the annual musical service in aid of the Wesleyan Poor Fund at Bradley is anticipated and supported by a large number of persons.

Of the ancient worthies of this Church, we have found no record; neither of the present staff of workers have we any biographical details: but amongst them we gladly recognise those who have done good service in their day. For some years Mr. E. Jordan served the connexion as one of its circuit stewards. We may however, refer to one or two notabilities, who gained their first impetus to Christian life and work in their early associations with this society. In a published account of the Broomhall family it is stated that

Mr. Benjamin Broomhall

was born in Bradley in 1829, and that he was brought up amongst the Wesleyans. He became a local preacher in 1848. Removing from the place, he eventually married the sister of the Rev. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland

Mission, and this led to his being identified with that work as its secretary. He was blessed with a large and talented family of children, most, if not all, of whom are engaged in mission work in China. Mr. Broomhall is deeply interested in the Anti-Opium Crusade, is the secretary of the Christian Union and editor of its organ—*National Righteousness.*

Mr. Alfred E. Rose, an able preacher, and a Christian merchant of New York, was a scholar in the Bradley Sunday School. His father was a Trustee of the Chapel, President of the Mutual Improvement Society, and a generous supporter of the Church. He was the owner of Bateman Hill Works, and the author of "A Guide to the Iron Trade." His son Alfred went to America when a young man, and became a minister of the Gospel. His career promised to be one of great success, when his health failed and he was reluctantly compelled to retire. At the time of his visit to England in 1893, he was chairman of Harnby's Company in New York. He readily accepted an invitation to preach at Bradley, where he had been trained in Christian service. The large congregation listened with deep attention to his discourse. Doubtless many other encouraging illustrations of good work done at Bradley are written in the book of God's remembrance.

Methodism in Moxley.

THERE is not much material at hand for a detailed account of the rise and progress of Methodism in Moxley. As stated in a former chapter, it was first of all worked as a Mission Station from Darlaston. "Gentleman John Wilkes" is said to have taken a deep interest in the work here, and to have assisted in securing a place of worship. Edward Lancaster was also an active and zealous supporter, and met a class weekly for thirty years, while still a resident in Darlaston. It is said the first preaching room stood in the portion of land between the Wednesbury and Darlaston roads. The first chapel was built in 1837, on the present site of the schoolroom, but was smaller in size. The present substantial building was put up in 1853 on a site near by, for which £190 was paid. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs. Thorneycroft, of Wolverhampton, and followed by a sermon in the evening by the Rev. G. B. Macdonald, the collections being £22 10s. 9d. The total cost of the building was £950, of which £550 was raised, the remainder being borrowed for a time. Dr. Newton opened the building, and the collections on that and subsequent occasions, in connection with the dedication services, amounted to £133 1s. 2d. The premises were further added to in 1859, when a vestry was built and paid for at a cost of £58. Security from damage by adjacent mining operations was obtained by a payment of £78.

In 1861 the old chapel gave place to the present commodious schoolroom at a cost of £469. Further additions to the sanctuary were made in 1875, when the orchestra was built, the

organ erected, and other improvements effected, at a cost of some £300, of which £254 were raised, including a special contribution of 50 guineas by Mr. Roberts. By 1881, all previous debt on the chapel and school having been discharged, the sanctuary underwent a thorough renovation and improvement at an expenditure of £400, of which £250 was raised at the time, and £100 has been paid off since, leaving only £50 to be grappled with. From this summary it will be seen that the Moxley friends have provided themselves with well built and commodious premises, and have worked hard and given liberally to this end. Much has been due to the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Roberts, the only survivor of the original number of trustees, who during his fifty years residence in Moxley, as trustees' treasurer, and in other positions has promoted the interests of the work in general and of the sanctuary in particular. In addition to his efforts in the Wesleyan Church, he has been a noted worker in the temperance cause; and when a few years ago he celebrated his jubilee in that work, his co-labourers of the Bilston Temperance Society recogised his service by a suitable address and by handsome presentations.

From the year 1840, the society returns are no longer incorporated with those of Darlaston. Moxley appears under its own name as having two leaders and twenty-eight members, which in four years became thirty-eight, and five years later, in 1849, sixty-two. The society continued to increase till 1879, when there were seven leaders and seventy-nine members. That was the highest point reached. Since that time Moxley has suffered from unfavourable circumstances, and its numbers have declined. But it still maintains a vigorous Sunday School, a useful Band of Hope, and takes a considerable interest in Foreign Missions. We hope brighter days, as the result of hearty and united co-operation, are in store for Moxley Methodism.

Methodism in Pleck.

WHEN and by whom Methodism was introduced into the Pleck is not known. A cottage in the Four Horse Shoe Lane, now called Wellington Street, was first used as a preaching place. After this services were held in the National Schools on the main road. In the year 1840 the first Chapel was erected at the corner of Chapel Street and Old Pleck Road. The Sunday School was at the same time commenced under the superintendence of Mr. William Wolverson and Mr. Jinks. On their removal from Pleck, the school greatly declined, but was taken up and revived by Mr. and Mrs. Cox and Mr. Jabez Harris. The members of society were poor, united and consistent. In 1844 they numbered but 14, under the care of one leader. For twenty years they continued in fellowship with God and each other. They believed if they had a larger chapel, in a better situation, they would secure larger congregations. They prayed that God would open out the way. The late Mr. Henry Mills was then residing at Ocker Hill, but was erecting Iron Works at the Pleck, where he intended to reside. One evening after a Missionary Meeting at which he presided, he asked a few friends who had accompanied him and those on the spot to remain for prayer and consultation respecting a new Chapel. They decided to make an effort. The matter was favourably received by the Quarterly Meeting. A trust was formed. Land was purchased from Mr. Davenport for £126. A further sum of £800 was spent on the building, and in 1861 the present Chapel was opened by the Rev. John Rattenbury, President of the Conference. The collections on that and subsequent occasions reaching the

noble sum of £210. About this time Mr. William Maddock and Mr. Joseph Simpson came to reside at the Pleck, and were soon followed by Mr. W. Bennett and Mr. G. Perry, all of whom took a deep interest in the work and were actively employed in the Sunday school and other branches of Christian service. By 1864 the congregation had much increased and the little society had grown to 59 members, under the care of four leaders. In 1865 the schoolroom in Regent Street was built at a cost of £394, which was raised with the exception of £50. The collection at the dedication was £30. Amongst the subscribers, Mr. H. Mills gave £50 and Mr. Simpson £20.

In 1869 the Chapel underwent considerable improvement. The present gallery was erected, and an organ provided, the instrument being one of fine rich tone. In 1874 there were no less than 90 members at the Pleck, but in a time of trade depression many of the members left the locality.

With the promise of liberal help from Mr. Mills and others the question of a resident minister was entertained. Beginning with a Supernumerary, the Quarterly Meeting at length engaged the services of a fourth minister to reside at Pleck. But special sources of income failing, it had to be discontinued. At the present time, with a rapidly growing population, the question of the re-appointment of a resident minister, is one of vital importance. It may, perhaps, be best approached by the employment of a Supernumerary, and with the disappearance of the floating debt of £100 on the Trust estate, and the growth of the congregation and the Church, we trust the need of more commodious premises will be so urgently felt as to lead to a vigorous effort for their erection. The Society now (1895) comprises 52 members under five Leaders.

As the work of God in this part of the circuit was much indebted to the zeal and liberality of Mr. Henry Mills, Sen,, we reproduce the estimate of his character published in the Wesleyan Magazine of 1876 from the pen of the Rev. J. H. Norton, one of

the former Circuit Ministers, to whom we are indebted for some of the particulars given above.

Mr. Henry Mills was born at Ocker Hill, Staffordshire, on February 23rd, 1807. His father was a great admirer of Mr. Wesley, and often heard him preach. He suffered much persecution; but, for forty years, he served God faithfully, and died in peace. Henry, with the other children, was taken regularly to the old chapel in Meeting Street, Wednesbury. In early life he became serious; and, accepting the invitation of a friend to accompany him to a class-meeting, he there learned more perfectly the way of the Lord, and soon obtained peace with God through believing in the Lord Jesus. Since his decease, the following memorandum has been found in his own handwriting, dated Ocker Hill, May 6th, 1850:—

"I this day feel myself a sinner saved by grace. My feet are on the Rock. My heart is fixed on God. I have the witness of the Holy Spirit that my sins are blotted out. My name is written in heaven. God is my Father, and I am His child; and this I have known for more than twenty-two years." With advancing years the evidence of his union with Christ became clearer and stronger; and, to the comfort of many who met in class with him,—a service in which he ever delighted,—he told of temptations resisted, victories gained, prayers answered, and God glorified.

For more than forty years he was a class-leader; and, feeling his responsibility, he sought wisdom from above, in the daily study of the Bible, and in frequent and protracted prayer. He knew where his members lived; and when they were sick he visited them, and when they were in need, he fed them. Between the Leader and his charge there was mutual esteem, and consequently mutual profit. He took a deep interest in little children, and was very useful in the Sunday-school. Mr. Mills always possessed the confidence of the Circuit ministers; for they saw that what interested them interested him. And he was ever ready to aid in the erection of chapels or schools, and also to assist in the extinction of chapel debts. As a Circuit-steward he

sought alike to promote the interests of the circuit and the comfort of the ministers. In the Wednesbury Circuit there were kindred spirits, with whom he delighted to unite, to devise liberal things. He was a lover of good men, and used hospitality without grudging, not only towards those who could ask him again, but towards the widow and the orphan, who shared his bounty, and delighted to wear the gifts bestowed by him and his excellent wife.

Mr. Mills was a man of unwavering trust in God, and steadily followed his convictions of duty, even when to some persons he appeared to be mistaken. It was a rare thing for him to be deceived by applicants for help: the dissembler was repulsed, and they who were needy were relieved. He was jealous also for the honour of God, and never allowed sin to go unreproved in his presence: but he seldom made an enemy.

More than twenty years ago, a distinguished physician told Mr. Mills that his life was in jeopardy from an internal disease. The Church of God prayed that he might be spared, and God gave them their request. At times, during the last few years of his life, he suffered much; but he did not murmur nor magnify his troubles. His pain sometimes produced irritation of temper, but if ever he was betrayed into the utterance of a sharp word he regretted it. Whatever failings other people might see in him he saw more himself, and looked to the precious blood of Christ for habitual cleansing.

When in perfect health, he was lively, but not light; thoughtful, but not sad. He loved all denominations of Christians, with a decided preference for the Church of his early choice. His last affliction was brief, and his death sudden. His final testimony was, that all was well, and that Christ was precious; and on June 29th, 1874, he died in the Lord, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. Many letters of sympathy were received by the bereaved family; but we can only give an extract from one addressed to the widow by the Rev. Thomas Pearson, then of York:—

"Your husband was not an ordinary member, or office bearer in

the Church of Christ. His conversion to God was remarkable. His powers of mind were vigorous and acute. His faith in God, in His revealed truth, in His providence, and in the efficacy of prayer, was ever conspicuous. God prospered him in business, and enabled him to acquire wealth, not to clutch as a worshipper of mammon, but to distribute as the steward of God. He delighted in giving. In him the poor widow, the poor old man, the workman shattered by toil and affliction, the unfortunate merchant, and the Christian minister of small income or afflicted family, ever found a friend and brother." "The memory of the just is blessed."

Appendix to History of Methodism in Wednesbury Circuit.

I.

Addenda—Wednesbury Methodism.

For the following additional information we are indebted to Mr. F. W. Hackwood, the historian of the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Slater and William Wright.

In 1801 died (April 20th) Mrs. Slater, of Wednesbury, aged about 80. She was one of Wesley's first disciples, joining his Society in 1743, along with her father, mother, husband, and five of her brothers and sisters. She and her hushand had all their furniture destroyed in the Great Riots, yet her sweet disposition and amiable temper were never at any time perturbed in the least. She was a daughter of John Griffiths, of Hob's Hole, another sufferer by the Riots. In the January of the following year (1802) died "Good Old William Wright" for so he was generally known in Wednesbury—in his 80th year, and the 58th of his course as a Wesleyan Methodist. His attendances at the Parish Church and at the Wesleyan Chapel were so regular and constant as to become proverbial in the town. In persecution, as well as in prosperity, he was equally steadfast in his well-doing.

John Bayliss and others.

John Bayliss was born at Wednesbury, 24th July, 1735, O.S., and received his first quarterly ticket from Mr. Mather in 1762.- This ticket was "Charity," and he preserved it to his death, which occurred at West Bromwich, August 28th, 1823. It was Sunday, May 16th, 1813, that the new Wesleyan Chapel in Spring Head was opened for divine service, thus superseding the Preaching House in Meeting Street. There were then living just a very few individuals who were present at the opening of the first chapel in 1760, among them Francis Whitehead and William Stokes. The last-named died at Holloway, January 4th,

1825, at the age of 84, having been a member of the Society from his earliest youth.

Stephen Timmins and Son.

Many references have been made to Stephen Timmins, that disputatious leader of the Wednesbury Antinomians, who so boldly withstood John Wesley (1746) as recorded in *The Journals* and elsewhere. Yet the son of this man appears to have been a most consistent and life-long Wesleyan. Stephen Timmins, born 1755, attended the preachings of John Wesley with his parents from his earliest childhood. At the age of five he was baptized by the founder of Methodism, with two others of the family, at their house in Holloway. He died at the age of 83, on November 5th, 1838, and so passed away another link in the chain of local Wesleyan history.

A Centenary Celebration.

In 1843 (January 9th) a centenary celebration on a small scale took place at the old house in Holloway, where John Wesley had held his first Society meeting just a hundred years before. A few friends met at two o'clock in this old cottage, when Thomas Davis, jun., gave out Montgomery's hymn "One Song of Praise," after which an aged gentleman engaged in prayer. In the evening reference was also made to the centenary at Harvills Hawthorne Chapel.

While on the subject of these old classic spots in the history of local Methodism, it may be here suggested that something should be done to mark and preserve the old house, 92, Bridge Street, in which dwelt Francis Ward, and from whence John Wesley was dragged out by the mob in 1743. No doubt it has undergone many changes—the first grates were torn out on that momentous occasion—but it is still the identical cottage.

Lord Dartmouth,

of the closing period of the last century is said to have frequently attended the services in Meeting Street, and to have so far identified himself with the people called Methodists, as to prefer being known amongst them as *Brother Dartmouth.*

Origin of the Local Missionary Society.

An extract from a letter written by the Rev. R. Waddy, 18th September, 1821, runs:—

"On Tuesday, the 18th September, a branch Missionary Society was formed at Wednesbury. The services were highly interesting. On Monday evening the preparatory sermon was preached by the Rev. Robert Newton. On Tuesday morning the Rev. Joseph Taylor, one of the General Secretaries, preached in the place of the Rev. R. Watson, who was prevented from attending in consequence of indisposition. At half-past two the Rev. John Riles at Birmingham, was called to the chair. The various resolutions were proposed by the Rev. Messrs. Edwards, (Dr.) Taft, Cooper, (Dr.) Newton, Bicknell, Waddy, Banks, and Ingle, and seconded by Messrs. Booth, Adams, Bagnall, Botteley, Constable, Upton, etc., etc. The chapel was crowded to excess, an unusual degree of interest was excited, the flame of missionary zeal was kindled in many breasts, etc." The collection amounted to £67.

The size and importance of the Wednesbury Circuit in 1842 may be estimated from that year's report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. The Birmingham and Shrewsbury District contributions amounted to nearly £4000, of which Wednesbury contributed the largest sum, viz., £552 17s. 8d.; then came Dudley with £500, and Birmingham £367.

II.

Ministers of the "Staffordshire Circuit."

1723 James Jones, John Thorpe
1755 John Jones, John Johnson, John Hacking
1758 John Jones, W. Fugill
1765 T. Hanson, W. Orpe, J. Glassbrook
1766 W. Orpe, N. Manners, J. Poole
1767 T. Hanby, R. Roberts, J. W.
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1769 J. Glassbrook, J. Clough, J. Robertshaw, F. Wrigley

1770 J. Robertshaw, J. Clough
1771 R. Costerdine, Richard Seed
1772 Thomas Briscoe, Thomas Hanby
1773 Thomas Hanby, Joseph Harper
1774 John Shaw, Edward Slater
1775 Alexander Mather, W. Dufton
1776 Alexander Mather, John Wittam
1777 Thomas Taylor, John Whitley
1778 T. Mitchell, W. Horner
1779 T. Mitchell, R. Costerdine
1780 J. Broadbent, R. Swan
1781 J. Broadbent, J. Goodwin, F. Hanby

III.

Ministers of the Wednesbury Circuit.

The following list was compiled by the Rev. J. McTurk, and is reprinted from the Circuit Plan of 1892.

1801 Robert Miller, Richard Wintle
1802 Robert Miller, Jonas Jaggar
1803 Robert Miller, James Thom
1804-5 Robert Hopkins, Anthony Seckerson, William Harrison
1806-7 William Horner, Joseph Fielden, James Blackett
1808 John Simpson, sen., John Beaumont, William Pearson, jun.
1809 John Simpson, sen., John Beaumont, William Nother
1810 George Morley, William Hill, John Rigg
1811 George Morley, William Hill, Josiah Goodwin, Webster Morgan
1812 Jacob Stanley, Joseph Womersley, John A. Lomas, Joseph Saunders
1813 John Dean, Joseph Womersley, Joseph Saunders, John Mason, jun.
1814 John Ogilvie, John Hodson, William Rennison, John Thompson
1815 Jonathan Crowther, William Rennison, John Thompson
1816 Thomas Hutton, Thomas Fletcher, John Walton
1817 Thomas Hutton, Thomas Fletcher
1818-19 James Bridgnell, John W. Cloake
1820 Richard Waddy, Edward Banks
1821 Richard Waddy, Edward Banks, Timothy Ingle
1822 Jonathan Barker, Edward Banks, William Kelk
1823 Jonathan Barker, William Moulton, Joseph Entwistle, jun.

1824 Jonathan Barker, William Moulton, John Chettle, William Jones
1825 Thomas Kelk, John Chettle, Joseph Brougham, Henry Ranson
1826 Thomas Kelk, John Chettle, Joseph Brougham, Henry Ranson
1827 Thomas Kelk, Francis Collier, Henry Ranson, William Kelk
1828 John Hickling, Francis Collier, Henry Powis, Thomas Armson
1829-30 John Hickling, Charles Haime, Henry Powis, Thomas Armson
1831 John Walmsley, John Hughes, Charles Haime, John Slater
1832 John Walmsley, Joshua Marsden, John Slater, Thomas Stokoe
1833 Joshua Marsden, Benjamin Wood, James Miller, Thomas Stokoe
1834 Richard Waddy, Benjamin Wood, James Miller, Thomas Stokoe

(Walsall Circuit Formed, 1835.)

1835 Richard Waddy, Benjamin Wood, Joseph Hunt
1836 Richard Waddy, Joseph Hunt, James E. Moulton
1837 Joseph Hunt, John W. Etheridge, James E. Moulton, Nehemiah Curnock
1838 Thomas Eastwood, James Cheesewright, James E. Moulton, Nehemiah Curnock
1839 Thomas Eastwood, James Cheesewright, Nehemiah Curnock, John Parry
1840 Thomas Eastwood, James Cheesewright, Henry Wilkinson, John Parry
1841-42 Joseph Roberts (1), Henry Wilkinson, Robert Leake, John Osborn
1843 Joseph Roberts (1), Edward Usher, Robert Leake, John Osborn
1844 Elijah Morgan, William France, Edward Usher, John Vanes
1845-46 Elijah Morgan, Samuel Simpson, John Vanes, James S. Thomas
1847 James Shoar, William Tarr, Samuel Simpson, James S. Thomas
1848-49 James Shoar, William Tarr, Benjamin Slack, John Keightley
1850 Thomas Harris, Benjamin Slack, John Keightley, William Exley, Thomas Kent
1851-52 Thomas Harris, James Laycock, Joseph Heaton, William Exley, Thomas Kent
1853 William Naylor, James Laycock, Joseph Heaton, John H. Norton, William Moss
1854 William Naylor, John P. Hetherington, Nathan Rouse, John H. Norton, William Moss
1855 William Naylor, Nathan Rouse, John H. Norton, William Moss William H. Cornforth
1856 Jonathan J. Bates, Joseph T. Milner, Nathan Rouse, Jacob Morton, William H. Cornforth
1857 Jonathan J. Bates, Joseph T. Milner, Charles Tucker, Jacob Morton, William H. Cornforth

1858 Jonathan J. Bates, Joseph T. Milner, Charles Tucker, Jacob Morton, Thomas H. Brocklehurst

1859 William Elton, Robert Inglis, James Smeeth, William B. Dennis, Thomas H. Brocklehurst

1860 William Elton, Richard Rymer, Robert Inglis, James Smeeth, William B. Dennis, James Shearman

1861 William Elton, Richard Rymer, Robert Inglis, James Smeeth, William B. Dennis, James Shearman, Ezekiel Burton.

(Wednesbury (Wesley) now West Bromwich (Hill Top) Circuit was formed 1862.)

1862 William Allen (1), Richard Eland, jun., Henry Banks (2)

1863 William Allen (1), Richard Eland, jun., Isaac Gould

1864 John Relph, Richard Eland, jun., Isaac Gould

1865 John Relph, Samuel H. Morton, David Stewart

1866 John Relph, Samuel H. Morton, Joseph C. Wright

1867 Thomas Heeley, Samuel H. Morton, Joseph C. Wright

1868 Thomas Heeley, Joseph Spencer, Joseph C. Wright

1869 Thomas Heeley, Thomas Crosby, James F. Pyle

1870-71 Joseph Moorhouse, Thomas Crosby, John Pollitt

1872 Joseph Moorhouse, John Weatherill, John Pollitt

1873 William H. Bambridge, John Weatherill, John Stembridge, John C. Harvard

1874 William H. Bambridge, John Weatherill, John Stembridge, William Muncaster

1875 William H. Bambridge, John Stembridge, William T. Armstrong, William Muncaster

1876 William W. Duke, William T. Armstrong, James S. Hill, Joel Mallison

1877 William T. Armstrong, James S. Hill, J. Willis Britton, Joel Mallison

1878 Joseph Binns, James S. Hill, J. Willis Britton

1879 Joseph Binns, Thomas Baine, J. Willis Britton

1880 Joseph Binns, Henry Banks, Thomas Baine

1881 Henry Balls, Henry Banks, Thomas Baine

1882 Henry Balls, Henry Banks, John Judson

1883 Henry Balls, Edward D. Dannatt, John Judson

1884 William Andrews, Edward D. Dannatt, John Judson

1885 William Andrews, Edward D. Dannatt, Jonathan Chapple

1886-87 A. A. Southerns, Joseph H. Cadman, Jonathan Chapple

1888 A. A. Southerns, Joseph H. Cadman, J. Taylor Binns

1889-90 James McTurk, Josiah Tollady, J. Taylor Binns
1891 James McTurk, Josiah Tollady, Jonathan Hewitson
1892-93 William J. Wilkinson, John H. Wilkinson, Jonathan Hewitson
1894 William J. Wilkinson, John H. Wilkinson, Joseph Howard

IV.

Ministers sent out from the Wednesbury Circuit.

Richard Whatcoat, 1769, ordained Bishop by Mr. Wesley 1774. Died 1806.
Thomas Hill, 1808, died 1857. He was formerly cashier in Dorset's Nail Warehouse, in King Street, Darlaston
Joseph Hunt, 1811. Died 1861. He travelled in the Wednesbury Circuit from 1835—37.
Richard Felvus, 1823. Died 1871. Formerly an apprentice with Mr. John Wilkes, of Darlaston.
James Corbett, 1832. Died in 1835.
John Lambert, 1832. Died in 1871.
Reuben Partridge, 1836. Died in 1850.
Jabez Yardley, 1838. Died in 1850.
Thomas Withington, 1837. Still survives.
Thomas James, 1845. Died in 1876.
Henry Banks, 1840. Still survives.
Josiah Felvus, 1862. Still survives.
E. Israel Lyndon, 1890.
Francis J. Griffiths, 1894.

N.B.—The figures immediately following the names indicate the year of entrance on the ministry. The above list embraces only the present area of the Wednesbury Circuit.